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"AND YET, PHILLIS, THERE IS ONE CONDITION ON WHICH I MIGHT BE MORE CONSIDERATE—NOT FOR HIM, NEVER!—BUT FOR YOU—IF YOU WILL BECOME MY WIFE!"

ALMOST IN HIS POWER:

Or, More Sinned Against than Sinning.

BY LILLIAN LOVEJOY.

CHAPTER I.

A DASTARD'S DEEDS.

"BOAT, ahoy! Is that you, Ben?" in a stealthy whisper.

"Yes, Mr. Barnes. Be you ready to come, sir?"

"How is it now in the Ladye-Bird? Have you heard anything of them the last half-hour?"

"Not much, sir. They're most quiet 'cept the old captain. He and the young 'un are at it still."

"That will do. Pull in close, and steady the boat while I get in."

The boatman complied.

The man on the shore looked round long and warily before embarking. An hour after midnight, and no light but that of stars. The naked palisades rising gaunt and rugged behind him; before him the tranquil Hudson, calm and placid, beneath the starlight. In the dim distance the lights of a yacht, at anchor out in the great, broad river.

"There's no mistake about that being the Ladye-Bird, Ben?" asked the man addressed as Mr. Barnes, as the Englishman pulled steadily out into the stream.

"Not a bit, sir. Haven't I seen her up and down the river this last year and more? There's not a better known, tauter bit of a craft atween this and the Hook. Yes, them be the Harlem bridge lights, sir," pointing to a little illuminated patch that was just disclosed to view on the other side of the river.

"Ah, no one saw you leave old Bolt's landing to-night, I hope?"

"Not a soul, sir," returned Ben, indulging in a grin in the darkness. "And you, sir—how did you get over, and down here?"

"Oh, well enough. The fact is, Ben," assuming a tone of confidence, "Mr. Garlapel—the captain, as you know him—is a curious man. I manage his law business for him, and he will have it done secretly. As a wealthy old bachelor, with plenty of relations and a crusty temper, he's constantly changing his mind and making fresh wills. That's why I'm here to-night; and I only hope he's not too drunk to sign his name."

"Likely as not," muttered Ben, resting on his oars to listen. "They seem quiet enough now, sir. I don't hear him or t'other."

"Pull gently, Ben. While I'm on board you must lie off, in case you're seen. I don't suppose any watch is kept. I shall whistle when I'm ready for you to take me back."

They were close upon the yacht now, whose symmetrical and beautiful proportions were dimly visible in the uncertain light. Ben pulled silently round to leeward, and then alongside.

A flood of light and voices streamed forth from the cabin as they passed under the stern. Otherwise all was in silence and obscurity.

"How will you get aboard, sir?" whispered Ben.

"I must clamber up somehow; it isn't very high. Stay, there's a bit of rope. Give me a leg up to it, Ben."

The athletic boatman did so; and as Mr. Barnes stretched up to lay hold of it, something square and dark slipped from his pocket. Ben caught it dexterously and without a word.

When Mr. Barnes was on deck, he leant over the bulwark, anxiously.

"Anything the matter, Ben?"

"Nothin', sir," was the reply, while Ben, with his hand in his pocket, was fingering a—pocketbook.

"All right. Lie off, and wait for my whistle."

Mr. Barnes watched until Ben had shoved off into the darkness, then he turned his attention to on-board. He listened long and intensely. From the stern came the hum of conversation—nothing else to hear, save now and again the drowsy creak of spar and cordage. So he stole to the illuminated skylight on the small quarter-deck. There was a cat-like stealth about his movements. With care he could look down and hear the talk in the brilliantly-lighted cabin, himself unseen. He both looked and listened.

Confusion reigned below. Two men were the only actors on the scene, both in a fairly advanced stage of conviviality—if not intoxication. Elegantly cut decanters and champagne bottles stood about half empty, when not tipped over. Dessert had not been cleared, for shivered wine-glasses, fruit, cards and silver plate lay about on the table in strange medley. A huge pine-apple, with a jack-knife sticking up in it, stood in front of the younger of the two—a man about thirty years of age, and of handsome, frank, reckless appearance. The other was short, elderly, with little choleric eyes, and rubicund and jovial as King Cole.

They were unbecomingly their hearts to each other, in that candid manner engendered by good wine: at times boisterous, at times maudlin. The elder of the two had evidently a great affection for the younger.

Mr. Barnes's breath came short and quick once or twice while he listened.

Presently the elder stretched his hand behind him, and brought forth from a cabinet, unsteadily, an iron box. This he unlocked and produced several papers and a sealed packet, which he showed to the younger exultantly. Then he closed it again and left it on the table before him.

During this operation Mr. Barnes's eyes glistened greedily. He now desisted from watching the pair, and turned his attention, strange to say, to the illumination of the cabin. This was performed by two large lamps—one swung at the foot of the companion-way, the other a little below the skylight through which he was watching.

Cautiously he stretched his arm down to the latter one. Yes, as he thought, he could reach it and turn it out if he chose. He did not choose—at least, not then—but carefully withdrew his arm. Then he stole round to the companion-way. Again, as he expected, the stairs down into the cabin were open to any one. Stooping, he could even see the lamp

that swung at the bottom of them, even catch the gleam of an empty bottle or two that lay on the cabin floor.

He crept across to the bulwark now, and looked over it. The night was very still; the great river was so calm that the reflected stars looked like rich jewels, rising and falling on its dark, sleeping bosom. The young Englishman and his boat were not to be seen.

"Lying off far enough, at any rate," he muttered.

Then he took his hat off, and, drawing in a deep breath of the soft, cool night-air, gazed up into the dark-blue sky.

After a while he glided across to his post of observation at the sky-light again, and there crouched down, watchfully and thoughtfully. He noted the iron box was still on the table, the jackknife still sticking up in the pine-apple; he noted the change that had come over the talk below, more disjointed and discordant with the wine that had flowed. Then he noted that from jangling, matters proceeded to quarreling, and the elder man laid down the law in a gross, swaggering manner, that the younger resented. Hot words followed; then a blow; then several, and a scuffle.

All this Mr. Barnes noted, and now he set his teeth hard. His chance had come.

He thrust his arm through the open skylight again, and this time turned the lamp out. Then he made for the companion-way, and down it. The decrease of light had evidently not affected the broil. But on the second lamp being also turned out by Mr. Barnes's willing agency, there was a sudden hush. The combatants couldn't understand the meaning of this unexpected darkness.

The silence was broken by the sound of the iron box being moved. What followed can be described by the imperfect means of hearing only, night having asserted her merciful supremacy. A hoarse shout; oaths, strugglings and gaspings; then a dull thud, accompanied by a low, blood-curdling cry—what could this mean?—then a fall and clatter, as if the table and contents had been turned over; and then Mr. Barnes emerged from the companion-way onto the deck, panting, his hat in his hand, and the iron box under his arm.

Some one had been roused, and was coming up from the fore cabin, as Mr. Barnes leaned over the side and whistled. There was no need for this, as the boat and boatman were just below him.

"Is that you, Ben?" he gasped. "Quick, man! Take the box, and help me down!"

Ben said never a word, but did as he was told, and Mr. Barnes was in the boat in another moment.

"Shove off! Be sharp, my man!" And suiting his action to his words, he gave the

boat a vigorous push out from the side of the yacht.

Ben seemed in no hurry, but resumed his oars and began using them stolidly. The distance between the yacht and boat increased, but they could hear a commotion on the former, and could see lights flitting to and fro.

"Get to shore as quick as you can, Ben," said Mr. Barnes, in a voice that was strangely husky. He was sitting at the stern of the boat, with his hat drawn over his brow, and the iron box beside him.

No reply from Ben, but the same steady pull landward.

"The captain was very drunk to-night, Ben," said Mr. Barnes, after a few minutes, with more composure in his tone. "When I had got him to sign the document, he quarreled with his nephew, and I came away and left them at it. Between them, they seem to have roused everybody on board."

Silence, all but the noise of the oars in the rowlocks. Ben stopped rowing, and then even that ceased. They were about midway between the yacht and the shore now.

"Why don't you go on, Ben?" asked Mr. Barnes, anxiously.

Ben turned a huge quid out of his cheek and then ejected it over his shoulder into the dark water, as if that were the cause of his long reserve.

"Can you swim, Mr. Barnes?" he demanded, solemnly.

"N—no! Why do you ask?"

"'Cause, if you do, you may stand a chance of getting straight to shore."

"What do you mean, Ben?"

"Why, that I'm going back to the Ladye-Bird, to see what's the row aboard her."

A pause, the two men eying each other keenly through the semi-darkness, Ben resting on his dripping oars.

"Let's understand one another, my man," said Mr. Barnes, at length. "You wish to return to the yacht. Why?"

"Ay, let's understand one 'nother, master! You be open, and so'll I," returned Ben, coolly.

"What about? You seem to have suspicions. Out with them!"

"Like enough I have suspicions. Any man would who'd been under that there stern, and seen them lamps turned out, and heard what followed. I shouldn't like to say what it was, but look'ee there!" and suddenly shifting both oars to one hand, Ben stooped forward and caught Mr. Barnes's coat-sleeve. "That's not wine nor yet water," holding his fingers up in the dim starlight, "and it's not dry yet!"

Another pause; the boat drifting a little; both men measuring each other still.

"What do you want?" growled Mr. Barnes, gloomily.

"That's accordin' to what you mean. It would go ag'in' my conscience if anything's happened to the old captain, but if you want to get to that there shore straight away, you must down with something 'andsome. You haven't got that box 'side you with nothin' in it."

"There's nothing in it of any use to any one but myself, I can assure you of that. Its contents are papers and legal documents. Neither have I anything of the least value about me."

"Then, master, I must trouble you to hand that there box over to me, and I'll take care of it till to-morrow mornin'. I'll bring it to the hotel, carefully wropped up so as nobody sees it, and we can settle safe enough then."

The manner was not vicious but resolute. The seemingly stolid young Briton was not a person to trifle with, that was apparent.

Mr. Barnes considered within himself for a minute or two. If Ben could have seen the savage light in the eyes beneath the felt hat, it would have been a warning to him.

"You can go with me," dropped from Mr. Barnes, slowly. "I am staying for to-night at a little cottage by the cross-roads, above Fort Lee."

"Right, master! But first the somethin' 'andsome. How much is it to be?"

"We can settle that, surely, as well by-and-by as here?"

Ben seemed doubtful. At that moment the sound of oars came distinctly over the water.

"A boat's put off from the yacht!" exclaimed Mr. Barnes, hurriedly. "There'll be a hue and cry after us in another minute! Come, Ben; it's now or never!"

Ben dipped his oars in, and, with a vigorous stroke, headed the boat for shore again. Then he paused.

"Now, just mark, Mr. Barnes, you don't give me the slip! It's no good if you do! Your name mayn't be Barnes, but I shall know who you are and where to find you quick enough!" --hugging his pocket closely. "So I give you fair notice, that's all!"

Then Ben's oars went to work, and they were soon under the shadow of the dark cliffs, not far from where they started, just below Clinton Point.

"The boat's gaining on us!" whispered Mr. Barnes, hoarsely. "They're sure to have seen us!"

"We shall do 'em! I must beach the boat, and draw her up into a nook I know of, where they won't find her till doomsday. When she fetches bottom, do you jump out and run her up hard."

The operation was successfully performed, and they soon housed the boat in an abandoned quarry at the foot of the cliffs. The boat from the Ladye-Bird was not close enough behind to discern what had taken place.

"Now, then; this way!" exclaimed Ben, as Mr. Barnes was shaking off the water, in which he had been up to the waist. "We shall be atop afore they can beach theirn! You first, master."

Ben pointed out a narrow, rugged pathway, which wound up the cliff, and of which they could only see a few feet in front of them. Up this Mr. Barnes proceeded to clamber with difficulty, the iron box under his arm, closely followed by the more nimble Ben.

It was some minutes before they emerged on the top. All was darkness here; but they managed to find a footpath that ran along parallel with the edge of the cliff.

"We must keep close to the edge," whispered Ben, "to put 'em off the scent; then we can strike off through the woods toward Engles, when we'll hev to spend the rest o' the night with a friend of mine."

"Will that be better than trying to recross to the other side to-night?" queried Mr. Barnes.

"Rather! You lead on, master; I'm here."

And close at Mr. Barnes's heels followed the wary, hard-headed Ben.

The path wound at times perilously near the cliff's edge, but the boatman knew every foot of the way, and directed Mr. Barnes carefully where to go.

This gentleman was evidently beginning to find the box an incumbrance from the way in which he constantly shifted it from arm to arm.

"Now you can see the Fort Washington lights," muttered Ben, as they came in view of a narrow band of light that shot out into the river from the other side. "This little bit round the bend of the cliff is the closest touch of all, master. There's a bare three-foot track along the edge, and below, a sixty-foot drop, and plenty o' rocks a' bottom."

Mr. Barnes proceeded very deliberately now. In the middle of the narrow way he paused, as if weary, and raised his burden onto his shoulders.

"Done up?" inquired Ben. "I suppose it's no use offering to carry it for you, master?"

"I don't mind," replied Mr. Barnes in a low thick voice, turning and facing the other.

Ben chuckled as he saw Mr. Barnes lift the box again from his shoulder.

But, only for an instant; then it descended with a sudden, lighthing-like swiftness on the boatman's unguarded skull. He reeled, clutched wildly at the empty air, and then Mr. Barnes was left alone with his iron box at the top of the Palisades!

No sound but the lap-lap of the water against the rough shore below greeted his listening ears.

After a minute or two of anxious, intent suspense, he resumed his solitary way, with a

scarce perceptible shudder, and soon disappeared in the impenetrable darkness.

The second dastard deed of that most woful night.

CHAPTER II.

AFTER LONG YEARS.

It is a brilliant scene in the grand *salon* of the Lyntera Villa, on this particular evening. One end of its broad floor is partitioned off by a stage front and green curtain, all complete and fitted up by skilled workmen from the city, while the greater length of it is fast being crowded by a gay and brilliant throng—the aristocracy of “The Hill.”

Among all the elegant villas and fine estates upon the stately Hudson, along the Palisades, this of Lyntern, the English banker, is one of the most conspicuous. Proud of his English paternity and of the blood of the noble house of which he was descended, the banker had built himself a veritable castle, as if to remind his American neighbors of his ancestry, and loyalty to his English associations.

On this particular occasion the banker celebrates the coming of age of his only son and heir and proposes to celebrate it with due festivity, while, as an added incentive, he has for guest, one of his father's friends—a real live duke who is the reputed owner of vast estates in Devon, yet, in truth, is looking for a wealthy American alliance by which to clear off his heavily mortgaged properties.

So there is to be a grand ball preceded by some amateur theatricals, the performers wherein are members selected from its august body.

The orchestra are playing selections from “Patience,” preparatory to the rising of the curtain, while the hum of conversation rises louder and louder upon each arrival.

In the “green-room” utter confusion reigns supreme, as the quondam actors are hurriedly muttering over their parts for the last time, and the finishing touches are being given to the various toilets by two distracted ladies' maids.

In a deep window recess at the further end of the room stand two figures looking out into the moonlight and whispering softly. They are the hero and heroine of the play to come—the hero and heroine of our story—and the words which now pass between them are scarcely the parts they are supposed to be.

“I certainly *must* go, Mr. Dearn. See, it is half-past eight! The curtain will be rung up in five minutes, and I haven't even rouged my cheeks yet,” with a swift, saucy glance up into the eyes looking so tenderly into her drooping face.

“Never mind the rouge, Miss Hatherly.

Your sweet wild-rose color will be more effective than any amount of paint or powder. But—Phillis—I *may* call you Phillis, may I not?—I *must* see you for a few minutes to-morrow; to-night after the play, there will be so little opportunity. You will be the belle of the ball, the star of the evening. Monopolized by other fellows I will have no chance to speak with you excepting during those waltzes you have promised me, and that is scarce sufficient. Will you, Phillis—will you?”

A little sigh escapes her; she neither looks up nor gives consent.

“Well, but you will, *dear* Phillis?”

He grows bolder as time presses.

—“Perhaps you may chance to be walking under the elms or resting in the summer-house, sometime during the afternoon. Phillis, one word will—”

But the curtain has been rung up; her cue is given; one bright gleam from under her long dark lashes, and she has left him.

Will she be there, or will she—

No! There can be no alternative he thinks!

The play is in full swing—rather a jerky, amateurish sort of swing, it is true; lorgnettes are leveled, and the hum of conversation is lulled for the nonce.

“Your grace,” says Lyntern, pompously, to the duke, a round, red-faced, chatty little man, with a bald head and bandy legs, “what do you—ah—think of the play?”

“So, so—not my line, comedy-drama. Very good, no doubt—confounded slow! Who's the pretty girl—plays heroine?” asks the guest, after a pause. “Dark handsome man makes love to her—very nice.”

“That's Miss Hatherly. Ah! a good-looking girl, as your grace says. The man is Cyril Dearn, who wrote this play. A poor devil of an author now. Of good English family, though. Your grace—ah—may remember about his uncle, Arthur Dearn? Gambled the family estate away. He's living still. Good-evening, Mr. Garlapel,” to a gentleman who is passing. “Your ward—ah—has talent, and is playing excellently.”

“She is fond of it, and plays often,” returns the gentleman, and he goes by.

“Seen him before—who is he?” inquires the duke.

“He's a nephew of the old Garlapel who—ah—was murdered some ten years since on his yacht. This one came in for his money. He's wealthy. He it was who—ah—sold up Arthur Dearn. He lives at Dearn Park now. Miss Hatherly is his cousin and ward.”

“Deuced pretty girl! Not much judge—but deuced pretty!”

Presently his grace takes an opportunity of going behind the scenes and being introduced to the fair object of his admiration. She

doesn't seem to receive his compliments warmly. And all during the short interview the dark handsome young man—who, by the way, is only dark on the stage, and sports naturally a fair curly head of hair and tawny mustache—is looking unutterable contempt and aversion for his grace from a distance.

But Mr. Cyril Dearn's *innings* come soon, when he feels the full benefit of being his own author. For in the last act of that play there is a certain amount of embracing and kissing of the heroine necessary for the adequate comprehension of the plot, that sends a delirious sort of thrill through the young author. The long and short of which is, that Cyril Dearn is as madly in love as a young man of five-and-twenty can be.

After the play is over, the bouquets all thrown, the performers called, the authors called, and the congratulations done flowing, the ball commences. The entire lower floor is the scene of it, and a very charming, animated, sparkling scene it is, too.

As is to be expected, the heroine of the play becomes the belle of the ball, and Miss Hatherly's dance-programme is overflowing speedily with the names of young male fashionables, for all sorts of improbable dances, beyond its printed limits.

"My dear Phillis, a word with you," says to her the gentleman whom the banker addressed as "Mr. Garlapel." "Let me have a look at your programme."

"Why, Gideon, do *you* want a dance?" she asks, her brown eyes sparkling with merriment as she hands him the gaudy trifle. "I haven't the shadow of one left—not for you even!"

He is a plain, rather harsh-featured man, middle-aged, with a dash of iron-gray about his black hair and heavy mustache; but there is a wonderful amount of fire and expression in his dark eyes. And fire of a rather unpleasant kind lights them up as he hands back the programme to the young lady.

"My dancing days are over, Phillis, as you know. What initials are those, pray?"

"C. D., Gideon," she answers, with a blush.

"Which represents Mr. Cyril Dearn, I suppose. Unless I am mistaken, they are down seven times, while no one else is favored more than twice. This won't do, Phillis. You know who and what this Dearn is—a loose sort of fish; no favorite of mine. You mustn't dance these dances with him."

"But how can I refuse him, Gideon?" she expostulates, her sweet mouth puckering a trifle petulantly.

"Leave that to me; I'll speak to him. I've no doubt you'll find other partners."

And she finds, as Mr. Garlapel assures her, that the owner of the initials C. D. does not

offer himself to fulfill his remaining engagements with her that evening. How Mr. Garlapel effects this she does not know; but she knows that his expressive dark eyes follow her about persistently, as if suspicious of her desiring to dance a surreptitious valse with Cyril Dearn.

But even Mr. Garlapel's eyes cannot be everywhere.

The small hours of the morning have crept on, and the dancing is beginning to flag, when Phillis Hatherly is left alone for a minute in the conservatory, while her partner is fetching her an ice, and, by some curious coincidence, Mr. Cyril Dearn, in that little space of time, happens to pass where she is sitting—also alone.

She, hearing his footsteps, looks up with a start to find him moodily regarding her.

"So it was even too great a task to fulfill your engagements for the evening with me," he says, in a bitter tone, "that you had to send your cousin to excuse you?"

Even then the spirit of coquetry is so deep within her that she thinks to tease him before answering; but she hears approaching voices and knows the time is short.

An instant and she is at his side, clasping his hand and looking up into his face.

"I *didn't* send him, Cyril."

Oh, how sweet his name sounds coming from those dear lips!

"He forbid my dancing further with you; but, Cyril, I *will* meet you to-morrow at three under the elms," and before he could answer she was gone.

Many of the guests are housed that night—or morning rather—at Lyntern Place. Among those who enjoy this hospitality are Mr. Garlapel and his pretty cousin, Miss Hatherly, and the young author, Cyril Dearn.

That is how it is that same afternoon Phillis Hatherly is tripping so daintily down the terrace-steps, looking as fresh and charming as if she had had a sound night's rest instead of a few hours' restless sleep after a hard night's dancing.

Autumn winds are blowing and stirring the dark tresses on her white brow despite the wisp of gossamer she has tied across to keep them in place. Her brown eyes are brimming over with a certain demure roguishness and enjoyment.

The sweet saucy puss has managed to slip out unobserved, and is going for a stroll in the avenue, only because her soul is pining for quietness and solitude for a little while. The faintest sprinkling of rain is coming on, but not enough to chill a butterfly, she thinks; and arrived under the elms, she saunters about—a charming, pensive picture of unconsciousness and innocence.

This is very nice and proper, but after a little it grows a trifle—well, tedious. She peeps around, then looks boldly about her. No one seems coming to disturb her pleasure.

Meanwhile the rain is coming down more steadily, and the wind sends it with little buffets in her face, and the green velvety turf is growing wet to her little feet.

What shall she do? She draws her fragile wrapper more closely about her, and brings forth a fan from her pocket. That will at any rate keep the impudent rain from driving in her pretty face.

As she spreads it, lo and behold! she hears the click of the gate behind her! Some one is invading the sacred precincts of the pleasure. She is seized with a sudden desire to get indoors again, and hurries toward the gate under shelter of the fan. She murmurs to herself—"He is coming! I've a good mind not to speak to him; it would serve him right. I won't! Oh, he's brought me an umbrella. What fun!"

And the first notice she receives of the invader's intentions is the descent of the open umbrella on her like a huge toad-stool, and then the handsome face of Cyril Dearn under it, dangerously close to her own.

"Oh!" she cried; she is so prettily surprised. "Don't you want it for yourself, Mr. Dearn? It's so kind of you! I'm only just going to run across the terrace indoors."

"I have another here," he returns, still sharing the one with her. "It is a small one; but this is large enough for two. I'm so sorry I kept you. I waited here; but when I saw the rain coming, I posted off for these."

"You kept me!"—and her brown eyes open on him wide with innocence. "Oh, no! I just happened to come this way, as I wanted a little quiet after last night's excitement."

"Just so. And I wanted a little quiet, and happened to come this way also."

"How very strange! Well, I'm going indoors now, so you won't be disturbed. Will you oblige me with the little shade?"

"This is a very good one, Miss Hatherly. Don't be afraid! Keep under it with me."

"But I want to go indoors, and couldn't deprive you of—"

"Then stay and enjoy it with me; and after, you shall have the comfort of it."

"Any one would think we were a pair of ducks, to be walking up and down this place in this absurd fashion on a wet afternoon."

"No doubt they'd be right in part. But, Miss Hatherly, I want a few words seriously. These moments are too precious to be wasted, Phillis."

"Since when has my Christian name been public property, Mr. Dearn?"

"Never, that I know of, unless I'm the pub-

lic to you. But, Phillis, dear, listen to me. I wish to tell you something about myself. You needn't get very wet, if you come close enough. Stay; we can shelter here."

He drew her within a little bower at one side of the avenue, so overspread with foliage that but little rain had had time to ooze through. Still, as there was no seat in the bower, they were compelled to stand up under their umbrella.

"This is very funny," she says. "But we mustn't be long. Cousin Gideon will be looking for me."

"It is about Mr. Garlapel, and his connection with my family that I wish partly to speak, Phillis. I am a very poor man, as you—"

"Excuse me, but you're very egotistical, Mr. Dearn," she interrupts, rather petulantly. "I don't wish to hear particularly about yourself."

He looks at her in some sort of blank surprise and reproach. He can't quite understand this.

"I mean," she adds, more mildly, "I have heard from Mr. Garlapel more about your family than you could tell me in half an hour, Mr. Dearn. So if your information is preliminary to something else, tell me the something else, or else I shall have to go away without hearing it. That would be provoking."

He pauses, thrown somewhat out of his reckoning.

"I cannot understand you, Phillis. You are the most strange, delightful, bewitching girl I ever met! In the course of my twenty-five years of life I've met a good many—"

"Again! Is about Mr. Cyril Dearn all you have to keep me in the rain for?"

"Why, hang it all, Phillis! But there, you shall have it, sentiment or no sentiment! My darling, I love you with my whole heart! I wanted to tell you of the poverty-stricken, down-in-the-world sort of a fellow I am; but you won't let me. Phillis, I want you to be my wife. I will make you happy, if deep, honest love can make you so!"

The artful little puss! She must have known what was coming—what he was striving to get out in the methodical, preconsidered manner of the male human creature. A fortnight's constant rehearsal; the daily gazing up into those gray eyes of his, and noting the growth of light more tender and fervid than that bred of any actor's ardor; the pressure of his arms; nay, even the very warmth of his kisses must have told her all!

"That's what you said in 'Broken Hearts,' last night. I can understand how it came about your hero is such a talkative, unreasonable fellow, Mr. Dearn. The part fitted you like a glove."

"But, Phillis, I'm in earnest!—madly, terribly in earnest!"

"You said that, too—in the last act, just before I accepted you."

She is looking down demurely, calmly, on the ground. Oh, how these women like to feel their power!

"Oh, my darling, don't play with me! You cannot torture me like this for—for fun?"

"I don't remember that."

"I won't bear with it, Phillis! I want an answer!"—seizing her with one hand, while the umbrella dances about frantically over their heads in the other. "Now, what is it to be?"

She doesn't answer him; but he has drawn her so close that even he can see, looking down into the depths of her brown eyes as she raises her head, something new, and gentle and holy—something she has not let him see before.

"It is 'yes!'" he cries.

She gives a series of little nods, and he presses her to him, and kisses her soft, unresisting lips, after the fashion of the newly-accepted lover, the umbrella performing gymnastics overhead.

"Shall I hold the umbrella a minute?" she asks, soberly.

"Bother the thing!"—and he casts it on the ground.

"That's enough—that's enough!" she says, trying to disengage herself. "You had plenty—too many last night, sir."

In fact, the rain is really getting too bad for the ardor of love even. Not that Cyril Dearn would mind much; but the young lady insists on returning forthwith. At the terrace steps she pauses.

"I cannot let you come further with me. We may be seen. And you quite agree with me about—"

"About not telling Mr. Garlapel for the present? Certainly, Phillis."

"And no sigus, nor looks, nor sentiment, if we meet in company."

"Not a wink, darling. And now it's my turn. Why wouldn't you let me speak about my position and circumstances when I wanted to, Phillis?"

The way she looks at him will be recompense, he thinks, for any piece of raillery she may follow it up with. But no, she is in earnest.

"Because, Cyril, dear, it wasn't position, wealth, or anything else of that sort I cared about; it—it was *you*!"

And with one kiss—the first—she trips away up the steps, aware how much she has betrayed herself.

CHAPTER III.

WRAPT IN MYSTERY.

"GIDEON, who was my mother?"

This question is addressed by Phillis to her cousin and guardian. A couple of months have passed since the coming-of-age festivities at Lyntern Villa, and winter has set in. Dinner is over at Dearn Hall, and Mr. Garlapel and Phillis are sitting alone in the stately old drawing-room. A fire is blazing on the hearth, and the lamps shed a softened radiance around on the rich crimson upholstery.

She repeats her question, for Mr. Garlapel is so deeply immersed in his book, that he does not seem to have heard her.

"Your mother, Phillis?" and he lays his book aside. "Why do you ask, my dear?"

"I was thinking about what you said the other day, about my growing more like my mother."

"Ah, Phillis, and that is true," he says, and his harsh features soften as he looks at her. "I have reason to remember her very well. She was of French extraction, and of very good family, I believe. When first I met her I was only twenty, and she a couple of years younger."

"Then you knew her before papa did, Gideon?" she says, in surprise.

"Thereby hangs a tale, Phillis. I not only knew your mother, but loved her, before your father ever saw her. Ah, I thought then, Julie Delacroix a charming and beautiful woman!"

"And that's how it is, dear Gideon, you have never married?" she says, looking at him kindly. "She couldn't love you and papa."

"True, Phillis. But—and I don't see now that you shouldn't hear the true story—when I introduced your father to her as my dearest friend, she had already confessed that she loved me."

"Oh, Gideon!" she cries, in a low, pained voice.

"And within a month after, my dearest friend went off with her, and they were married before I dreamt of her inconstancy. I never spoke to either of them again, but I vowed I would have my revenge."

He says this with a bitter fierceness, as if he were still gloating over the realization of his vow. She lies back in her chair, hushed and pale, with the tears welling up in her brown eyes.

"But there!" he adds, after a pause, drawing a deep breath; "they're both gone now, and that's over."

"And you have had your revenge—a noble revenge, dear Gideon," she says, leaning forward again.

"What do you know of it, Phillis?" he exclaims.

"Why, in taking me, their only child, and bringing me up and caring for me as you have done."

"Well, well, my dear; perhaps I did it for my own sake, as much as anything. You have been a comfort to a lonely man, Phillis."

And again he watches her, with that softening of his harsh features, as she sits gazing into the fire.

"Did mamma die before papa?" she asks, after a minute's silence.

"Before your father was— Yes, I mean; two or three years before your father, my dear."

"I don't remember anything of mamma's dying," she says, thoughtfully. "I don't think I was much with her; but I well remember your coming to the boarding-school and telling me of dear papa's death, Gideon. That must be quite ten years ago. And then you brought me here. Had you been living at Dearn long then, Gideon?"

"Only a few months," he answers, shifting about uneasily.

"Do you know, Gideon, I've heard some people say that—that you were rather hard on Arthur Dearn."

She hesitates a little as she says it.

He eyes her grimly, as if he would read her very soul.

"'Some people' means Cyril Dearn, Phillis, I suppose? I wish you had never met that man! But mind, Phillis, you've done with him! You have never met him since leaving Lyntern Place?"

"No, Gideon," she says, softly, looking down with a blush.

"If you do—if I find it out, I shall have something to tell him about yourself that will make it impossible for even him to have anything more to say to you. No; never mind now, my girl. Don't ask about it. You shall know some day, perhaps."

She has looked up with a sudden brightness in her eyes, and a proud curving of the mobile lips, as if she would challenge any one to say anything to discredit her in Cyril Dearn's sight.

But he takes no notice.

"And as for being hard on Arthur Dearn," he goes on, more quietly, "you know, Phillis, that the man hadn't a farthing of his own in the world. He had gambled everything away. When I inherited my uncle's property, I found I. O. U.'s of this man Dearn's, which he never seemed to have the slightest intention of settling. Consequently I did the only thing I could—sold him up and bought in the estate myself. If I hadn't done this, some other creditor would have done it shortly."

"Mr. Dearn never made the slightest reference to the matter in my presence," says Phillis here, rather proudly.

Mr. Garlapel merely inclines his head in answer, and silence ensues.

Phillis's thoughts are busy over this "something" he has hinted at in connection with herself. What can it be, this mystery, which, if communicated to another, would bring about such an ominous result?

"You must excuse my curiosity, Gideon," she says, at length; "but you have excited it in what you have said about myself. Is what you mean known to any one else?"

"My dear Phillis, don't ask me further! There is a mystery attached to your life that in the eyes of the world will ever place you apart from other girls. One day it may be necessary for you to know it. For the present dismiss it from your thoughts."

"But—but, Gideon, supposing I—supposing some one ever did care for me enough to make me an offer, would it be necessary first for him to know of this?"

He doesn't answer her.

As she looks up for the reason, he rises, and comes and stands over her.

"Phillis, what does this mean? Has any one ever dared—has this fellow, Cyril Dearn, ever dared to make love to you—to offer to marry you?"

There is fierce, repressed passion in his tones, and as he leans over her, the lurid glow in his dark eyes makes her shrink.

She has to summon all her fortitude to answer him lightly.

"Why, Gideon, you seem to bear this poor Mr. Dearn a sad grudge! What if he did have to make love to me on the stage, it needn't be carried into real life!"

But her little forced laugh does not deceive him.

"I see it now, Phillis!" he mutters, in a low, tremulous voice. "That fellow *has* dared to love you, and you have returned his affection! You can't deny it, girl!"—with a sudden passion.

And Phillis cannot. She buries her burning face in her hands, and leans back in her chair.

He takes two or three turns up and down the room, and then says, sternly, "How far has this gone, girl?"

"I love him, Gideon, that's all I know," she answers, in desperation.

"That's quite enough. Listen. If you want to live here—if you want to have a roof over your head, you must forget this man. You must wipe his very name out of your memory. If he pesters you to see him, or with letters, leave him to me; I'll deal with him. There, you have your choice now!"

And he resumes his walk up and down.

"Oh, Gideon, how can you be so hard?" she pleads, with flushed, agitated features. "You haven't even heard what Mr. Dearn has to say,

Have you no memories of your own young love that can make you generous toward us? You have always had my happiness at heart hitherto, dear Gideon."

And as he turns in his walk close to her, she extends one hand to him, with a faint, coaxing smile.

Her soft touch has an effect on him that is electrical. A flood of emotion, wild and impetuous, sweeps across the grimness of his features, overwhelms the man, and the next instant he is on the floor beside her, pouring out a torrent of words with an ardor, a deep quivering tenderness that thrills her, yet holds her spellbound, like one in a dream.

She makes out presently that he is telling her of his great love for her; that he has felt it growing on him; that he at first thought it was for her mother's sake; that the truth has come upon him lately, and will she now ruin all hopes of happiness in his life—blight it as it was blighted in his younger days?

"I have no one else in the world to care for, Phillis. I am all alone but for you. It isn't as if I were a young man, and could go and find love where I sought it. Men at my age don't forget, and I shall never love again. I have always looked on you as my own. You have grown up to a womanhood of loveliness and purity in my sight, and my heart has gone out to you. I thought I could wait, and you might turn toward me; but to have you snatched away, to have to give you up when I want you most, I cannot do it. It is my right to have you, my darling, and I will, despite any man!"

And he takes her in his strong arms, and holds her to him, and kisses her; and she is unable to resist him. And when she lies back in the chair, convulsed with sobs, his arm is still round her.

"Leave me, Gideon," she says, brokenly. "I shall be better by-and-by. I cannot speak to you now."

"No, Phillis; I shall not go till you have given me some hope that you will try to love me. I can wait. To be near you is heaven to me."

There is silence for a few minutes. She is recovering from her agitation. His passion has so surprised and whirled her away on its vehement flood that it is some time before she has regained calmness and consciousness enough to think what she is to do—what is her position.

"Oh, Gideon, go and leave me now!" she pleads again. "You are taking advantage of my position. What you have said is so new and strange I cannot realize it. Leave me alone, Gideon."

And she attempts to rise.

But he won't let her. He stands up himself, and goes and leans against the mantelpiece opposite her.

"You must excuse me, Phillis. I was carried away by my love for you. I cannot leave you without some word to bid me hope."

"What can I say?" she moans, half to herself. "I love you so much, Gideon, because you are so good to me—"

"You love me?" he exclaims, catching at the word.

"Yes, Gideon; but not—not as you mean. What you have said is a great trouble to me. Such a thing as this never occurred to me. I would not pain or displease you if I could help it for anything in the world; but—"

"Well, Phillis?" as she pauses.

"But love such as you wish, Gideon," despairingly—"oh, I cannot, cannot love you as I love—"

"Don't name him!" he thunders, striding forward furiously. "Spare me at least the infliction of hearing *his* name every minute!"

She cowers down in her chair, as if she were afraid he would strike her.

"Now, understand me, Phillis!" he says, in a hard, unfeeling voice. "I have offered you such love as you will never have offered you again! It will still be here for you; but you must first learn its worth. You must learn what it is to have your love scorned and thrown at you, as you will when I have told that man what it is my duty to tell him! I warn you his affection won't survive—"

"What can you tell him about me?" she breaks in, all her spirit aroused. "I have a right to know now, Gideon."

He looks at her darkly for a moment; then turns away.

"I will spare you, Phillis."

And gathering up his books and papers, he quits the room.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MYSTERY UNVAILED.

"MY DEAR, DEAR LOVE:—

"This from the 'Homestead,' where I arrived this morning, and am staying *incognito*. I have news, darling—great news for you and me. I have just heard that my aunt, Miss Brand, who as you know, died recently, has made me her sole legatee. That means that I am the master of a splendid fortune—enough to buy back Dearn Park, if it can be bought. Will your guardian have any objection to my suit now? But I must see you, dear love, and therefore am I here. Will you meet me—I may not come to you, you know—in the Willow Walk? That part of the park is deserted enough. I will wait there from three o'clock till you come. My messenger is perfectly trustworthy. Give me a 'Yes' or a 'No,' and I shall understand. Adieu, darling, till we meet.
C. D."

This note is put into Phillis's hands, as she takes her morning's walk, by a village lad. Despite her pretty confusion and blushes, she understands it so far that she is able to give him his message—the single word, "Yes."

A week had elapsed since Gideon Garlapel's confession of his love. No reference has been

made to that scene, and the daily routine at Dearn Hall goes on as heretofore.

When lunch is over, Phillis dresses herself, and sets off a full hour before the appointed time. It is December, and the weather is raw and cold. There is a leaden sky, and the wind sighs drearily through the naked branches of the trees in the avenue. But wrapped in her rich seal-skins, and with the bloom of fresh air and exercise on her cheeks, Phillis looks a charming picture of health and beauty.

She pursues her way leisurely, for she is not pressed for time. The footpath she is following winds round a coppice of young trees, and as she approaches it, she is startled by a sudden movement in it. She hesitates a minute, then decides to pass it rapidly.

Her design is frustrated, however. Suddenly a creature of strange appearance emerges on the path in front of her. It is a man, with shabby, unkempt hair and mud-stained clothes, so tattered and deplorable that they will scarce hang on his gaunt frame. His cheeks are hollow and wasted, and his eyes shine out from their caverns with a hungry, half-starved look.

He confronts her doggedly, with an evident intention of barring her way. He does not speak, but stares at her with an intensity as if he could not believe his senses.

"What is it, my good man?" inquires Phillis, covering with a bold front certain little sensations of trepidation. "Can I be of assistance to you?"

In a moment he recovers himself and glances round like a hunted animal. The action moves Phillis strangely.

"There is only one woman on earth you can be," he says, in a husky, quavering tone, "and that is Phillis Hatherly."

She recoils a step from him. Some dim memory has been touched within, more by the man's voice than his announcement. And she stands in a whirl of thoughts, as her childish recollections come sweeping across her.

"You don't remember me," he says, watching her. "Stay; we shall be seen. Will you come in here—that is, if you can trust me?" he adds, bitterly.

What is the spell about this man that holds her—that induces her to follow him unhesitatingly under the shelter of the coppice?

"This will do," he says, faintly, and seats himself on the trunk of a fallen tree. "Come here, Phillis Hatherly, and look at me closely."

She obeys—she cannot do otherwise, she feels. Overhead, the closely-interwoven branches of the young trees make it almost twilight where they are. As she gazes at him she sees his white, drawn lips are quivering with some emotion.

"I have seen you before," she murmurs. "I—I do not know where. Years ago I knew you. Who are you? Oh, tell me!"

The question is wrung from her in a tone of anguish, for memory has received a jog from the intensity of her feelings, and she knows now that this has been some one very near and dear to her.

"You do not remember me?" falls from him, brokenly. "How can I tell her? Wait, Phillis! Think back on your young life, and tell me of it. What has become of those you knew? Where are your parents?"

"Both are dead," says Phillis, mechanically.

"What! your—your father dead, you say?" gasps the man, wildly. "When did you hear—"

"Father!"

And with a low, terrible cry, Phillis reels back. The man springs forward and receives her in his arms. He is so weak that he cannot hold her many minutes thus, he feels.

But she recovers quickly. As he leads her and seats her on the fallen trunk, tears come to her relief. At his touch she shudders and trembles in every limb.

"Don't be frightened, Phillis," he says, huskily. "I wish I could get you some water, my girl. But I daren't venture. You will be better presently."

A strange scene those two, seated there in the dim light. She young and beautiful, her dainty figure arrayed with all the elegance and luxury of fashion; he a wild-looking, famished man, a wreck in his tattered garments; and the dark, somber brushwood for a background.

In a little while her sobs abate, and she looks at him anxiously, questioningly. He reads her meaning. He is not sitting quite close to her, nor is he touching her now. Perhaps he is conscious of the distance his rags and misery place between them.

"You wish me to give some account of myself, Phillis, he says. "My girl, I fear I have done wrong in coming here to make you unhappy. I should have let you be. But I had not a soul in the world I could trust but you, my daughter. And my fear has been terrible that you would not recognize me—not acknowledge me."

"You are my father; my heart told me so," she says, simply, the tears welling up again.

And, despite his wretched condition, she goes to him tremblingly, and lays her fair young head on his shoulder.

Oh, the look of joy that comes into those poor hungry eyes of his!

"My girl," he resumes, after a few minutes, "the reason you have been misled as to my death is very sad. It will cast a cruel shadow over your life."

It flashes across Phillis now that this is the dreadful mystery Gideon Garlapel is in possession of about herself.

"Oh, Phillis, when I've told you all, you wish

us never to meet again, it shall be so. I would not mar your young life with the curse that is on mine."

"I can bear the worst if I am with you, father," she falters. "Tell me everything!"

"I will," he says, with desperate calmness. "Do you remember about the death of old Ralph Garlapel, my uncle? He was always called 'the Captain,' because he spent most of his time going about in his yacht."

"I do, father. He was foully slain in his own cabin some ten years since, was he not?"

"Yes, Phillis. And do you know anything of his assassin?"

"I believe the man was taken, and sentenced to State's Prison," she answers, reflectively.

"I never heard who he was. Cousin Gideon never liked speaking of the matter."

"Phillis," he says, very solemnly, "I am the man who was tried and sentenced. But wait, girl; I am *not* the man who committed the deed. I will not terrify your gentle ears with any oath to testify to my innocence; but believe me, Phillis, I would not venture here in your pure presence if I were that guilty man."

Poor Phillis! She shrinks from him with a low moan and gazes about her in a dazed way.

The dreadful truth comes upon her with a rush—her happiness, her love, her hopes in life are all dashed to the earth. In the eyes of the world her father is a convicted criminal!

"Do you doubt me, Phillis?" he asks, after some minutes' silence.

"No, no, father," she sobs, clinging to him convulsively; "not for one instant! But I couldn't realize it; it is so—so horrible!"

He draws a deep sigh of relief.

"But, father," she gasps, as a new thought comes to appall her, "how—how are you here? You have escaped!"

"It is true, Phillis," he assents, sadly. "I could endure it no longer—ten years of it. Three days since I escaped from Sing Sing. There was no hope for me in that place but in death. Life is still strong within me. I will make one struggle to prove my innocence."

"Oh, father, how have you lived? Have you had food?"

"I have broken my fast twice, Phillis. These rags I have stolen from a cottage. I took the worst I could find. I would not rob the man of much, and they answered my purpose. The first day they hunted me for miles, but I was stronger that day, and eluded them. I didn't know where to turn for help, so I made my way here by night. I had heard that cousin Garlapel had provided for you, and it was bitter news to me. And now, Phillis, I dare not ask you to share my wretched lot. I do not wish it. The chances are I shall be taken away."

"Father, I will share it—I will go with

you," she says, firmly, all her own sorrows forgotten in her sympathy for her outcast father.

"There are reasons why I should leave Gideon's roof. He has been making love to me, and I cannot endure it. And, father, I will devote my life to proving you innocent. Oh, if that could only be done!"

"My dear girl, you make me very happy. But the only way to prove my innocence is to find the guilty man. How can that be done without money? How are we to live, even?"

He says this looking at her tenderly, and he wonders how this delicate, beautiful girl will fare if she goes with him. But her determination seems fixed.

"I can work for us both, father. There is one thing I can do that, unless I am mistaken, will provide for us well. And that is—"

A sudden spasm of fear crosses her father's pale features, and arrests her. She hears footsteps coming along the footpath. They pause at the coppice; then she hears them again approaching.

"I must run for it," whispers her father, hoarsely. "Can you give me some money, Phillis? When shall I see you again?"

She presses her little purse into his hand.

"I will meet you to-night, father, at midnight, by the mill. And it will be to go with you wherever you go."

The desperate look of a hunted animal is on his face again as he presses her to him, and it nearly breaks Phillis's heart to see it.

"I will stop him, father, whoever he is, even if I have to cling to him," she whispers.

He glides away through the brushwood quickly, and she is alone. Then, checking her sobs as well as she can, she goes forward to meet this new-comer. All her courage is summoned, but suddenly she stands face to face with him, and her heart sinks like a stone. It is Cyril Dearn.

"You, Phillis!" he exclaims, in astonishment. "What are you doing here? And the other—I heard a man's voice."

And he starts forward in the direction in which her father can still be heard, forcing his way through the undergrowth.

"Stay, Cyril!" she cries, seizing his arm to keep him back. "Don't go after him. It is nobody—nobody you know."

He regards her curiously. In her excitement she is clinging to him, scarcely heeding what she says, and speaking amid broken sobs. Her tear-stained, flushed face is raised to his beseechingly, and the little hands pressing his arm are trembling with her agitation. Not a picture to soothe the anxious heart of a lover, who has been dawdling about a couple of hours at a rendezvous not far distant. Cyril Dearn, at least, doesn't seem to find it so.

"I don't understand this, Phillis," he says deliberately. "You appear to be excited. I

should like to know who that man is. If you would rather not tell me, I shall have to go and find out."

"No, Cyril, you must not!" still holding to his arm with the courage of despair.

"Then tell me who he is, Phillis. It is very strange, after making an appointment with me, that I should find you here in company with another man, whom I'm not even to know about."

"Give me time to think, Cyril," she falters. "I—I feel faint."

The sight of the sorrowful, beloved face tells on him, and his vague suspicions are dispelled under the magic of love. He passes his arm round her slender waist tenderly, and draws her close to him.

But his touch seems to nerve her with fresh strength, and with a convulsive effort she tears herself away. Now that she is assured her father has had time to escape, her own cruel position forces itself on her. The trial before her is a terrible one, but it must be faced.

"Why, Phillis, what is this?" he asks, reproachfully. "You have altered strangely since last we met."

"Mr. Dearn," she says, brokenly, "for the moment I forgot myself. I have a duty to perform that is very painful. Our engagement must be at an end. Do not ask me why. You will know some day, and then, perhaps, you will not think so harshly of me as you must now. Will you say good-by?"

"What does this mean? Has any one—?" Then a light breaks on him. "Ah, this is the explanation, then, of the man's voice I heard! My mistrust was well-founded, it seems. I've been made a fool of!"

His bitter words are met with silence.

Her head is bowed, and the scalding tears find their way down her cheeks. To deny the accusation is only to court prolonged suffering and further reproaches on his part. She is resolved not to betray by a single word about her father. Cyril will learn the sad truth soon enough from others, and then will know she has done for the best.

"I understand from your silence that my worst fears are realized, Miss Hatherly," he says, in a low, strange voice.

She only inclines her head and moves away slowly, her bosom heaving with the heavy sobs she cannot keep down.

He follows her out of the coppice, with a grim look on his handsome features.

"Good-by, Mr. Dearn."

Oh, the anguish at her heart as she says it! She offers him her little hand, and her eyes shine up at him through a mist of tears, despairingly. Perhaps this is the last time they meet.

"Phillis,"—and his voice trembles with his

deep emotion,—*"tell me you are acting under compulsion. I cannot understand this. It is scarcely three months since you promised to be my wife. You cannot have changed your mind. Only give me one little word of assurance, love, and I will cast my doubts all aside."*

He looks at her eagerly, fondly, but she has no words for him.

This is the bitterest moment of all. A wild longing seizes her to lay her aching head on his shoulder, and tell him all. She would have his strong arm about her once again. The temptation is great within her, and she feels that in another instant she shall yield. With a last desperate effort she turns away, and half-blinded with tears, flees down the path, never once looking back.

"Mr. Garlapel, from the Hall, to see you, sir."

"Show him in," says Cyril to the servant, in surprise.

At the "Homestead" on the following morning, Cyril is sitting at his solitary breakfast-table. He looks pale, for he has passed a sleepless night.

Mr. Garlapel is shown in, and the two men bow coldly. Cyril motions him a chair.

"I was going to call on you, Mr. Garlapel," he says, for Cyril has made up his mind to seek further explanation, if not from Phillis, from her guardian.

"I have saved you the trouble, Mr. Dearn," returns Mr. Garlapel, in by no means a pleasant tone. "I presume the object of your visit was about my cousin. Do you know where she is?"—looking at him searchingly.

"Unless she is at the Hall, I haven't the slightest idea."

"On your word of honor?"

"My word of honor is not necessary," says Cyril, haughtily. "You can believe me or not, as you choose."

"You are down here, I suppose, to see Miss Hatherly—clandestinely, if by no other means. Perhaps you have seen her already, Mr. Dearn?"

"I have. I met her yesterday afternoon. At that time she was conversing with some man I did not see."

"It is as I feared then," says Mr. Garlapel, removing his scrutinizing gaze from Cyril, as if satisfied. "You have not heard yet, Mr. Dearn, that Miss Hatherly left my roof last night secretly?"

Cyril bounds to his feet with a hoarse exclamation.

"Impossible! With whom?"

"Her father."

"Her father? He is dead!"

"Many suppose so. He has been dead to the world these ten years, Mr. Dearn. Charles Hatherly is a convict for life! He escaped, I hear, from Sing Sing three days since, and is without doubt the man Miss Hatherly was speaking to."

Cyril turns away to the window with something like a groan, and leans against it with his back to his visitor. There is a grim smile on Mr. Garlapel's visage as he watches him.

"Charles Hatherly," he adds, coolly, "was convicted of the murder of Ralph Garlapel, his uncle and mine, as you know. Since that time I have taken charge of his daughter Phillis, and until yesterday she had never heard of her father's crime!"

"Thank you, Mr. Garlapel, for telling me this," says Cyril, facing round again. "You have given me the clew to something I could not understand. Phillis Hatherly is a noble girl. I revere her a thousand times more for her self-sacrifice. I will seek her out, and, despite all the world may say, she shall be my wife!"

"And her father?" says Mr. Garlapel, significantly.

"If he has sinned he must suffer—not his daughter. If it be possible that he is an innocent man suffering for another man's crime—well, there is no work in the world I would so gladly perform as to prove his innocence."

Mr. Garlapel turns slightly pale, and the light that always seems smoldering in his dark eyes kindles.

"Very well, Mr. Dearn," he exclaims, controlling himself with an effort. "I also shall seek out Miss Hatherly and her criminal father, and, if I find the latter before the law does, he shall be recommitted to the prison he so richly deserves. As for Miss Hatherly—shall I tell you something? I love her as I loved her mother before her. That she, a girl of tainted parentage and dependent on myself, should be wooed by another, never occurred to me. I have always looked on Miss Hatherly as my own, and my own she shall be when I find her. Hitherto I've not been thwarted in life, and I give you notice, Mr. Cyril Dearn, Phillis Hatherly shall be my wife—*mine!*"

And accompanying this scornful utterance with a sinister scowl on his dark features, he hastily quits the room.

CHAPTER V.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

"WHAT address, m'am?"

"Number —, Tenth street, Harlem. Are the two trunks on?"

"All right, m'am!"

And the cabman bangs the door of his four-wheeler, mounts to his seat, and presently the clumsy, ill-hung vehicle is rumbling away out

of the great station and through the New York streets.

It is a soaking March evening.

After driving some time, and then receiving sundry directions from within, cabby turns into a small dark street, and pulls up in front of a house of modest appearance. By the time he descends from his seat the door has been flung open, and a flood of welcoming light streams forth from the little passage.

A young lady springs lightly from the cab, and trips into the house, followed by an old woman, who settles with cabby, and sees to the due transferring of the trunks.

"My father—how is he, Mr. Bolt?" asks the young lady anxiously of the man, who stands holding the door in the passage.

"Better, Miss Audley—better, thanks to the hopes of seeing you. He's waiting for you up-stairs."

She runs up quietly, and on the first floor is a door standing half open. She peeps round it. On a couch in front of the fire a man is stretched at full length. He is evidently watching for her.

"Papa, dear!"

She closes the door, and goes to him. He sits up, and takes her in his arms, and kisses her sweet face again and again.

"My darling, how I have waited and counted the days till you would return!"

"And here I am at last, papa; and for three whole days this time."

And she brushes away a tear as she stands up.

"Not longer than that, Phillis?"

"You forget, Mr. Audley, that my name is May," she says, with a gay pretense at dignity. "I'm Miss May Audley, leading lady in the Mr. Drake's comedy company now."

He shakes his head at her with a sad smile, and lies back on the couch again. Charles Hatherly—for it is he—seems more ill, and weak, and wasted than when we last saw him, even. He looks like a man going slowly, but surely to his death.

Our Phillis is a trifle paler than before, perhaps; and with the happiness of the lovely girl-face of yore is blended now a new and more tender light, giving her a very attractive and womanly beauty.

"I sha'n't be long changing, papa," she says, with another fond kiss.

And she goes away to a bedroom up-stairs.

When she comes down again presently, a girl is setting the table for tea. The room and its furniture have that sort of shabby genteel appearance peculiar to the ordinary boarding-house; but in the present glow of fire and lamplight it looks inviting and cosy enough.

"I suppose, Mary, you're glad to have your aunt here to stay with you?" Phillis says to the

girl, who smiled an assent. "Oh, papa, Mrs. Surle is so good and nice! She is just what I wanted, and looks after me like a regular dragon! Now, then, let us have tea!"

She draws the table forward to her father's couch, and seats herself close to him.

Three months and more have passed since Phillis quitted Dearn Park with her father. So far they have been safe from all pursuit. Since their arrival in New York they have occupied their present lodgings, under the name of Audley.

Phillis followed out her idea, and speedily found a theatrical engagement; and now is often away for two or three weeks at a time, playing in various towns.

The people they lodge with are a Mr. Bolt and his daughter Mary.

When Phillis first took to "the business," it was necessary she should have somebody to play the duenna—to take care of her. Mr. Bolt recommended his sister-in-law, Mrs. Surle, and Phillis found her a motherly, but uneducated, old soul.

"How long are you going to be away next time, Phillis?" asks her father, as she hands him his second cup of tea.

"Six weeks at least, papa! Oh, but don't look so unhappy about it! I've had such a brilliant idea; Mrs. Surle suggested it. We shall finish up at Yonkers and be there a fortnight; Mrs. Surle's home is there, you know. She has a daughter and a son whom they call 'daft.' That means something wrong with his head, I guess. They live in a little house right down by the river, and how nice it would be, while I'm there, if you could come and stay at the Surles! You could live entirely unnoticed, and it would do you so much good!"

"It would be a great happiness for me, my love, if I were well enough," said her father with a weary sigh. "We must ask Doctor Goodeal about it. But, it won't be helping on the great cause, Phillis. To see *that* on its way would do me more good than a dozen country places."

"I have been thinking over that, as well, dear papa," she returns, leaning over him with a wistful, loving gaze; "and I have even taken a small step in it."

"The worst is, every step is attended with danger, Phillis!" he says, bitterly. "Even if we had the money, I should be afraid almost!"

"The only way will be to get a trustworthy man to act for us, papa, and if he succeeds, promise him a good round sum."

"But where is the good round sum to come from, love?"

"Well, papa, for any other reason I should not like to sell poor mamma's jewelry; it's all I brought with me from Gideon's house. But for this cause I would gladly part with it; and with what that would realize, and what I've

saved, we might reckon on quite one thousand dollars. We might start with that; and every week I'm saving money you know."

"My brave girl! It's very hard upon you; and all for my sake!"

"Not at all, dear papa," she says, softly, with a tender glow deep in her brown eyes. "There is some selfishness in my desire to prove myself in the eyes of the world an honest man's daughter."

She has never told her father of her love. As the mute agony of that last meeting with Cyril Dearn comes across her now, she feels how sweet it would be to let her once lover learn the true reason of that parting—to let him learn then that she is the daughter of an innocent man—ay, if he can never love her again. And she wonders, with a dull aching at her heart, whether he has forgotten her already—whether he has found another yet to take her place."

"I didn't tell you, papa, what I have already done," she says, rousing herself, and stirring the fire, for they have both been sunk in reverie. "When I was in Brooklyn, Mrs. Drake, who has been very kind to me, you know, introduced me to her brother, Mr. Pierce. He is the head of the great legal firm of Pierce and Starkey, and has a fine estate down on Long Island. He was very cordial; so one day I took the opportunity of asking him, casually, if he could recommend a trustworthy private detective. He laughed, and asked if I was on the look-out for any rich relative, and then gave me an address of a detective, whom he considered the most capable man in New York."

"That's well done, Phillis! The only thing is, he must be a man whom we can place our full confidence in, without fear of his betraying it. He will have even to know that I have broken prison, and am living here in hiding."

"Oh, but, papa, nobody, believing you innocent as I do, could for an instant think you wrong in doing so."

"Ah, my love, but that's the question. Can we persuade this man to think me innocent also?"

"I hope so, papa," she responds, cheerfully. "And besides, we must make it worth his while."

"My little clever daughter is growing worldly-minded," says her father, stroking her dark hair tenderly.

"If we are going to do battle with the world for the right, we must use its weapons, good papa. And now shall I write to this Mr. Matthew Scorpe, and ask him to call while I am here? Dare we risk it?"

Charles Hatherly considers for some minutes in silence.

"I think you may write, Phillis," he says, at

last. "Of course, under the name of Audley. It seems to me our only chance. And if, when we see him, we don't like him, we needn't give him our confidence."

So the letter is dispatched that evening.

CHAPTER VI.

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND.

"As soon as Denny comes, show him up, Roberts."

"Yes, sir," returns the man-servant, leaving the room.

Cyril Dearn is lounging about his handsome apartments disconsolately enough this morning. They are situated in that fashionable locality, Madison Square. Of late, Dame Fortune has showered her favors on Cyril more bountifully than most men have experience of in the whole course of their lives. He is in mourning. Within the last six months an aunt has died, leaving him a very pretty fortune, and now, a week or two back, his uncle, Arthur Dearn, has likewise departed this life, and Cyril is heir of both. And yet this favorite of the fickle goddess seems anything but happy.

Presently he seats himself at his escritoire, and unlocking a drawer, produces a small MS. book. This he opens at the first page, dejectedly, and commences to read. The heading is as follows:

"Diary of my search for P. H. Written for reference."

As we may have to gain access to this book again, we will give a few selected passages.

"Feb. 13.—Still as wide of the mark as ever; shall give up the advertising. Either she can't or won't reply. Perhaps she is afraid to answer, in case it is a trap to lay hold of her father. Went yesterday to Trenton in reply to a hint of that stupid letter; but it turned out, as I expected, a wild-goose chase. This makes the third false scent I've followed up."

"Feb. 20.—No news yet. C. H. is still at large, I hear. The police are doing their best to find him. She is with him, I don't doubt. Can the man be innocent. I will look up his case."

"Feb. 25.—Have been through the evidence for and against C. H. carefully. It has a very black look. It seems to me as if the man committed the deed in a gust of passion. He confesses that he was quarreling at the time with the old man; also that the knife with which the deed was done was his own, and he had just been using it to cut a pineapple. It looks very clear, too, about the lights being put out. Who could have done it, if not himself? Then his story about the third person coming in and doing the deed seems highly improbable. And, most damaging of all, is his pretended pursuit of this third one in the boat. Any one would

conclude he was trying to escape. Some of the sailors said they thought a boat was in front of them; others contradicted this; none of them would swear to it. Under the circumstances, I think the sailing master of the yacht was quite right in taking him back, and making him a prisoner. Still, there are one or two points I should like to know more about. What was the subject of his quarrel with his uncle? If the crime was not done in passion, what motive could he have for it? Did any one else gain by it? These are questions well worth considering, I think.

"March 4.—I have just had a splendid idea. Gideon Garlapel must be followed. If he succeeds in the search, so will I. I'll have a detective on his track. Hitherto I have not liked to employ a detective, because I should have to inform him of C. H. being an escaped convict. But I had better take a trusty man into my confidence. I'll look about for one.

"March 10.—Denny is the man for me. He goes about his work skillfully and quietly. He has already found out that Garlapel is as much in the dark as to where she is as we are. Garlapel is in the city at present. Denny dogs his footsteps hour after hour all through the day. He cannot do much, or see anybody, that I don't know of. Denny has looked over the report of the trial of C. H. He points out about the iron box, which had escaped me. If there was an iron box of the Captain's, what was in it, and what became of it? This is important."

"March 12.—Nothing of any use yet. Denny thinks Garlapel has a detective to assist him. I cannot help wondering where C. H. is in hiding—where she is—how they are living! Perhaps she has to work hard for bare food. I wish I could find her, and help and protect her! But, strive as I may, all my efforts seem vain."

This is the last entry in the diary. Those we have given tell their own tale. Cyril turns the book over pettishly; there is nothing here but what he knows by heart almost. A knock at the door comes to his relief.

"Mr. Denny," announces the servant.

The private detective enters. He is a cheerful-looking little man, with light-blue eyes, light hair, and an unassuming appearance. He has been recommended by Cyril's lawyers as a young and clever man, eager to make a reputation in his own line.

"Well, Denny, what's the news about Mr. G.? Have you anything important?" asks Cyril, motioning the detective to a chair.

"Yes, sir. We have made a discovery that, if carefully followed up, may be of great use to us, I think. I told you that I felt sure Mr. G. had a detective working for him."

"Yes. Have you found who he is?"

"We have. It's Matt Scorpe—the very 'cutest man in the profession. We shall have all our work cut out if we have to watch him sharp!"

"You must, Denny. The better man he is, the more likely we shall be to get some clew from him. You are sparing no expense?"

"No, Mr. Dearn. I have two men on the job. The one on Scorpe is a foreigner—Rooshian, I think. I was bound to have him, or else Matt would have smelt a rat. He knows every man in our line in the town.

"Quite right. Do you know anything about this Scorpe? Could we get at him by-and-by with bribery?"

"I think not," says Mr. Denny, deliberately.

"Not on account of his principles—Matt hasn't got any. But he is a peculiar man, and I ought to know him. I started in the profession under him—worse luck!"

"How do you mean 'peculiar,' Denny?"

"Well, Matt Scorpe is always trying to be too clever. He'll overdo it some day. If you bribed him, it's ten to one he'd go to the other party and make him pay a bigger sum down, and throw you over after all. He has a better head than mine; is up to every trick and dodge ever thought of; but I'll be even with him yet. A man who's always on the square must win in the end."

"Very good, Denny. You've heard nothing of C. H. and daughter, I suppose?"

"Not a word, sir. I'm at a dead stop there; haven't the least little clew. You feel sure they're in town?"

"I do. I traced them into the city myself. Then I lost them entirely. However, keep a sharp look-out, Denny. We can't do more at present. Good-day."

And Mr. Denny takes his leave.

"Ah, does Mr. Audley live here?" inquires a portly, beetle-browed man, consulting an open letter in his hand.

He has had to knock twice—two heavy, thundering knocks—at the door of No. — Tenth street, before Miss Bolt has got herself into a presentable condition to answer him.

"Yes, sir," she says, looking at him with one eye, while the other seems to be watching two little boys playing in the street—for Miss Bolt suffers under an imperfection in her organs of sight.

"Tell him Mr. Scorpe wishes to see him."

Leaving him standing in the little passage, she disappears up the staircase, to return soon with the message that he is to step up to the first floor.

Mr. Scorpe does so, making the stairs creak beneath his portliness. He is shown into the little sitting-room, where he is received by Miss

May Audley, who was afterward joined by her father, Mr. Audley.

It is needless to go into the particulars of the interview which ensues. Suffice it to say that Mr. Scorpe, by virtue of his bland and suave demeanor, is soon taken into the confidence of Mr. and Miss Audley, when it is discovered to him—he has been on the verge of doing it for himself—that they are the Mr. Charles Hatherly and daughter who have been the objects of his search for some time past.

Quite inscrutable are the great detective's features as he learns this news. He listens with dignified complaisance to Mr. Hatherly's tale of his wrongs, mingled as it is with Phillis's protests of her father's innocence.

When they have finished, he begs a few minutes for deliberation.

"And so, Mr. Hatherly," he says, breaking an anxious silence, "you wish me to take up this case on the lines stated, and with a view of proving your innocence? It will be very difficult to prove anything in a matter that took place ten years back, I fear. Also, in assisting you, I shall be committing a breach of the law, whose officers, if I understand right, are even now in search of you."

"But if I am only proved innocent," says poor Charles Hatherly, "surely the law will be inclined to overlook my breaking prison?"

"And besides, papa is so ill!" pleads Phillis, wistfully.

"And then, again," proceeds Mr. Scorpe, waving their remarks aside with dignity, "the prime investigations as to the details of the trial, the evidence given, should be made by a lawyer. Still, I am equal to that business myself. Of course, you know, Mr. Hatherly, the sum you offer will be no sort of remuneration for my services; in fact, it will little more than cover the current expenses."

Charles Hatherly looks very blank at this information.

"Oh, but Mr. Scorpe," commences Phillis, eagerly, "if you will only wait, we can promise you double—three times the sum—"

"No, no, Phillis," interrupts her father; "I will not have it! I will not allow you to bind yourself in this way, I suppose, Mr. Scorpe," he adds, sorrowfully, "that, under the circumstances, we shall not be able to reckon on your services?"

"On the contrary, Mr. Hatherly, you may command them, as far as my humble ability goes," says the great detective, magnanimously. "The fact is, sir, I am a man of heart, and cannot bear to see a fellow-creature, whom I believe to be innocent, suffering under a weight of infamy and injustice. I shall take up your case warmly, and shall find my reward, no doubt, where—where I least expect it!"

Nobody observing Mr. Scorpe's heavy, dark features with an unprejudiced eye would have given him credit for so much "heart;" but Phillis and her father did not stay to consider this. They were only too pleased to have his assistance. It seemed too good to be true almost.

"And now," says Mr. Scorpe, rising, "we may consider the affair settled so far. I shall call on you again in a day or so, when I shall have got the matter pretty well in hand. Your hint about inquiring for the boatman, whom you feel sure you pursued on that night, is very good, Mr. Hatherly."

And, with a bland "Good-afternoon," Mr. Scorpe and his portliness betake themselves down the little staircase and out into the street, and then, by means of the "L" road, on the route for home.

Mr. Scorpe, though on his own evidence a man of heart, is a bachelor still. His "home" consists of two rooms, high up in one of those streets down town, used chiefly for business purposes. When he arrives at this lofty domicile, he finds a gentlemen waiting for him in his room.

"Good-day, Mr. Garlapel. I hope you have not waited long," he says, in his blandest manner.

"No, no, Scorpe. I just called to know if you've heard anything yet," returns Gideon Garlapel, impatiently.

"Nothing—nothing, Mr. Garlapel. Wherever they are hiding, it is a very safe place, and they are very wary. I've used every artifice I know of to lure them into betraying themselves, but it seems no use. I've just been to Harlem to see one of my men who fancied he'd got some clew, but it all came to nothing. Is it possible, do you think, that they've left New York again?"

"I don't believe it," is the brusque rejoinder. "They're in hiding down some of the slums, and there you'll find them one day. Do you want more money?"

"Well, Mr. Garlapel, expenses are mounting up."

"There you are!"—taking the notes from his pocketbook. "Another hundred on account. Mind you send me word at once if you hear anything."

When Mr. Scorpe has seen his client downstairs, he returns, and reclining in his shabby arm-chair, puts on his considering cap for some time. At the end of which he rises abruptly, rubbing his big white hands together with a satisfied smile.

"This business shall be the making of me," he mutters. "I see my way clear now. That man is innocent—not a doubt of it! I'll get the proofs of it, too, and then— Ah, my friend Garlapel, we'll make you open that purse of

yours wide. Matt Scorpe shall be a rich man yet."

CHAPTER VII.

BEN SURLE.

NOT the least among the attractions of Yonkers is its charming little "opera-house." Drake's "famous comedy company"—advertised since the middle of March in flaming characters all over the town—will inaugurate the "season" with a fortnight's stay.

At the lower end of the beautiful little city, stands a little square-built house on a gentle slope, rising from the sea. It is called "Surle's," and years ago used to be the principal place for hiring and letting out boats, when old Surle was alive. It looks a trim little dwelling now, with its fenced-in garden surrounding it.

Here lives Phillis's duenna, Mrs. Surle, when she is at home, with her son Ben and her daughter Bessie. Neither Ben nor Bessie are any longer young, both having some time entered that period of life comprised in the term "middle-aged."

Mrs. Surle is at home now; Charles Hatherly is also enjoying the shelter of this humble roof; and although Miss May Audley, the actress, has had apartments for the last couple of days at the hotel, she is often to be found at this end of the town.

"Are you feeling better yet for the change, dear papa?" asks Phillis, one morning.

He is lying on the parlor window-seat, basking in the warm April sunshine, and drinking in the fresh breezes. She has walked over after morning rehearsal to spend the day with him as she always does, and in her piquant yachting costume looks very fair and charming.

Phillis has sorrows and troubles enough for her young heart, but she has also so much hard work that she has no time to fret and look ill over them.

"I think I am a little stronger, my love," returns her father, hopefully. "Indeed, from what Mrs. Surle says, I'm afraid I'm not the greatest invalid in the house. Her son Ben was taken very unwell yesterday. She says it looks as if he were sickening for something."

"I trust not, papa," says Phillis, anxiously. "We shall have to find another place for you, if he is."

"Well, we'll hope it won't be necessary, dear. What a strange fellow this Ben is! He seems almost an idiot!"

"He has no memory, papa. Mrs. Surle told me he lost it entirely through an accident some years ago. Who is the letter from, papa?" pointing to one that lies on the little table beside him.

"It's from Mr. Scorpe, Phillis. I wonder I didn't think to tell you of it before. He is

coming down; he will be here by-and-by. He says he thinks he can put his finger on the boatman who pursued from the Ladye-Bird that night. I can hardly think it's possible."

"If he can, it will be a great step gained, papa. I am sure we can never thank Mr. Scorpe enough for what he is doing for us."

In the course of the afternoon that portly gentleman puts in an appearance. He greets Phillis and her father in his usual bland manner, and then allows his big person to be seated.

"I'm going straight to business, Mr. Hath—Mr. Audley, I should say—walls have ears! I wish to ask you a question or two. You say that on that fatal evening your uncle, the captain, produced an iron box, and that afterward that iron box was missing. Now, do you know anything of the contents of that box?"

"Only what was said at the time," replied Charles Hatherly, after a moment's reflection.

"As I told you, Mr. Scorpe, we were both unfortunately under the influence of drink somewhat. My uncle took from the box a sealed packet, which he said contained his will."

"His will? Ah, as I thought!" mutters the detective. "And did he tell you in whose favor it was drawn?"

"No; he would not. When I asked him, he said that neither I nor my cousin Gideon would be the gainers by it. He said it unpleasantly."

"And then you quarreled?"

"Not just then; a little while after."

"Excuse me, Mr. Audley, but I have reasons for pressing this question. What was the exact cause of your quarrel?"

"Well, Mr. Scorpe," returns Charles Hatherly, reluctantly, "if it hadn't been for the wine we had both had it would never have gone so far as it did. I've no doubt I was mostly to blame. My uncle accused me, and quite correctly, of having squandered one fortune, and therefore he would take care I should not have his to do the same with. He also spoke of—of my wife, and a previous engagement of hers, in a way I did not like. However, the upshot of it was, he struck me in his passion, and then the scuffle ensued."

"And so, no will being found, your cousin, Gideon Garlapel, came in for the property. I see—I see!" murmurs Mr. Scorpe, making a note in his pocket-book. "Now, Mr. Audley, I'll tell you how I found out who that boatman was, and who he is. Stay a moment! Is that any one listening in the garden?"

They are in the parlor, and Phillis, who is seated by the open window, puts her head out immediately.

"Not a soul is to be seen, Mr. Scorpe," she says, with a smile. "I think we are quite safe from eavesdroppers here."

But the portly detective has crept out from the parlor with a stealthiness hardly to be expected in such a bulky man, and, standing at the outside door at the end of the little passage, looks about him suspiciously.

"No one about. All right at present; but I can't be mistaken. I saw his face in the station here this afternoon; I saw it when I took the car yesterday; I saw it on leaving Garlapel's last night. Foreign-looking, too. Can Garlapel be playing a double game? What did he want to come down here for with me? I had to put him off; but it was not neatly done. Hem—hem! I don't like it."

After this uneasy soliloquy Mr. Scorpe returns to the parlor and announces that he must have been mistaken.

"I was going to tell you about this boatman, Mr. Audley," he resumes. "Well, I got hold, with some difficulty, of the local paper, the *Yonkers Gazette*, for that date ten years ago. Local papers are of use sometimes in these cases; but I had almost given up this one, when I stumbled across a little corner paragraph. It was about a man who had fallen over the cliff on that very night, and been found the next morning stunned and hopelessly deranged as to his brains."

"Why, it must be Ben, Mrs. Surle's son!" exclaimed Phillis, eagerly.

"The same, without doubt," returns the detective. "His boat was found a few days after hidden away at the foot of the cliffs. When I came down here last month I made every inquiry—even saw this very man; but could make nothing out of it, you know."

"And now what is to come of it?—what can you make of it?" asks Charles Hatherly, pale with excitement. "You don't think that Ben Surle did the deed?"

"No; but the man who did do it was rowed out to the Ladye-Bird by him. I hear that he has never recovered a fraction of his mental light since the accident—is virtually an idiot. You may depend upon it the true secret of that night is locked up in that man's lost memory."

"But how to get at the truth—how to assist the poor man to tell us what occurred?" says Phillis, with repressed excitement.

"That is a matter of patience and trial, Miss Audley," observes the detective, quietly. "Men out of their senses have been brought back to them before now. The result of your father's case depends on our doing this."

"There are Ben and his sister!" exclaims Phillis, as they see the two coming up the garden-walk. "Bessie has been out walking along the river with him."

"Do you mind asking him to step in here a minute?" says Mr. Scorpe, looking at his watch. "I ought to be off, for I must get back to town to-night. Time is money, and I have none too

much of either. But I should like to see this Surle."

Phillis goes out, and in a minute returns, followed by the unfortunate in question.

He has a hopeless, uneasy look about him as he stands just inside the door gazing vacantly round. His rough features are more than half concealed by his bushy hair and beard; but on his forehead there is a deep red scar plainly observable.

"Sit down, Ben," says Phillis, kindly, placing a chair for him. "The gentlemen only want to ask you a few questions."

"Do you remember the Ladye-Bird—the pretty Ladye-Bird, Ben?" asks Mr. Scorpe, leaning in his most portly manner toward Ben when he is seated.

Ben, whose dull countenance has been unrelieved by any intellectual gleam, suddenly brightens up at this.

"The Layde-Bird?" he says, in his harsh voice—"the Ladye-Bird? Where is it?"

"Why, the pretty Ladye-Bird in the river! the fine yacht, you know, my fine fellow!"

"The Ladye-Bird?" says Ben, again puzzling over the word.

"Yes; the beautiful Ladye-Bird! skimming over the water with her pretty sails like white wings!" explains the detective, blandly.

"No, no—red wings!" breaks in Ben, with a weak smile. "Bessie caught it, and put it on the back, here," holding out his hairy fist; but it flew away home—pretty lady-bird!"

Mr. Scorpe rises hastily, and buttons up his coat.

"Hem—hem! Sort of thing that requires patience; and my time is short," he mutters.

"I must be off, Mr. Audley. I shall be down again in a day or two—perhaps sooner."

Phillis has hardly been able to restrain a smile at the portly detective's discomfiture; but he hurriedly takes his leave now, and starts for the station, whither we must follow him.

He has reached the crowded platform, when he sees a gentleman who has evidently arrived by train, giving directions to a porter about his valise.

"Hullo, Scorpe! Any news?"

"Nothing particular, Mr. Garlapel. Hope to have shortly."

Mr. Scorpe's features are inscrutable and unconcerned as ever as he makes this ready reply in his suavest tones; but Garlapel's dark eyes flash on him an instant suspiciously.

"You are going back to town, Scorpe?"

"I was; but I can stay if—"

"No; you've enough to do in town. What have you being doing here?"

"Following up the ghost of a clew; but with no success, so far. You shall hear all about it."

"Never mind, now, Scorpe. 'There's your train'—as the whistle sounds. 'You haven't a moment to lose.'"

And Mr. Garlapel watches Mr. Scorpe board the car as if he were particularly anxious about the detective's not being left behind.

We must have recourse to Cyril Dearn's diary:

"March 20.—Cannot understand Scorpe's movements. Is he playing a double game, or has he another case in hand? Povitski watched him to a house in Harlem, yesterday. He was there an hour. Denny called there to-day, but could make nothing of it. An old man, named Bolt, and his daughter live there. Denny obliged to be careful not to excite suspicion. He asked if any lodgings to let. 'No; only let first floor, and that let at present.' 'Who to?' Miss Bolt looked hard at Denny. 'To a Mrs. Surle—old lady.' 'Had a rather stout gent called to see her yesterday?' 'Perhaps she had.' 'Could he see Mrs. Surle?' 'No; she had gone away for awhile.' 'Who was she?—what did she do?' 'Didn't know. She only lodged there—nothing else.' This was all he could elicit; not of much use at present. Garlapel has made no move so far, however."

"March 28.—Scorpe been up to Yonkers. There's no doubt he's on some sort of clew. Povitski says he was inquiring secretly among the boatmen for one who rowed out to the Ladye-Bird on that night ten years ago, or for any news of him. But he seems to have been unsuccessful. What can he want to be hunting up these details for?"

"April 5.—The police believe C. H. has left the country. They have given up the search. I don't think he has, nor does Garlapel seem to think so. Scorpe getting more mysterious than ever. He and Garlapel don't seem on the best of terms."

"April 10.—Believe we have a clew to C. H. at last. Denny has a man in his pay—a neighbor of the Bolts, in Harlem. Bolts are very close people. Till yesterday this neighbor has found out nothing. Then he saw an invalid—a man—being driven away in a cab. Not a cab to be got under five minutes' walk, so he could not follow. Could this invalid have been C. H.? I think it possible. Denny called there again to-day. Saw Miss Bolt. She said a man named Audley, friend of Mrs. Surle, had been staying there unwell, but gone now. Hadn't the least idea where. Didn't know where Mrs. Surle was. She was not coming back yet. Denny must have a stricter watch kept at this house. Who can this Mrs. Surle be, and where can she be? It cannot be P. H. in disguise? Surely—surely not!"

"April 12.—Scorpe gone up to Yonkers

this morning. What does this mean? Povit-ki after him. Am afraid Scorpe is getting suspicious. Wherefore his journeys to Yonkers? I will go up myself to-morrow, or send Denny."

"April 13.—Garlapel gone up to Yonkers! Scorpe come back, but going to return to-morrow. Povitski says he went to see people named Surle. These Surles again! There is a mystery about them. Things seem drawing to a climax at Yonkers. Can *they*—P. H. and father—be there? Oh, if I thought she were—my darling—I would— But this is not the sort of thing for my diary. I have sent Denny on. Garlapel has the start of us. If he finds C. H. first, and puts the police on, the game is played out, and we have lost. But if Denny's suspicion proves correct, we hold him at our mercy—if we are only in time!"

CHAPTER VIII.

SELF-SACRIFICE.

"THIS is most unfortunate, Mrs. Surle," said Phillis, anxiously. "What does the doctor report about your son Ben?"

"The very worst, Miss May. He says that my poor Ben have the fever bad, and I knew he was a-sick'ning for something. I said so," and old Mrs. Surle applies the corner of her apron to her eyes.

"I trust it may not be so serious, after all," says Phillis, kindly. "Doctor Leigh is with my father now, you say?"

"Yes, miss; Mr. Audley is not so well to-day. We only fear he may have caught it too."

Phillis is in great distress. It is the day after Mr. Scorpe's visit, and she has been detained longer than usual at the theater. It is already late in the afternoon when she arrives at the little house, and finds the doctor has had to be called in to Ben Surle.

"Oh, Doctor Leigh!" exclaims Phillis, as the doctor enters the parlor after visiting his patient, "has the worst happened? My father—has he taken the fever?"

"I'm afraid so, Miss Audley; but only very slightly, I hope. If he were not in such a weak condition it would not be serious. But we must hope for the best."

"And my son Ben?" asks Mrs. Surle.

"It's a bad case," returns the doctor, with a grave look on his elderly face. "But he has a strong constitution, though his head is weak, and may pull through."

"It would be dangerous now to move my father, I suppose?" says Phillis.

"Yes. He had better be nursed here."

"And cannot I see him?"

"For a few minutes only, Miss Audley. After to-day I must desire you to keep away

from here," in consideration of the people you mix with at the theater."

The doctor takes his leave, and Phillis goes up to her father with a heavy heart. She sits with him some time, lovingly trying to inspire him with some of the hope and good spirits she has not herself.

"I saw some one to-day, Phillis," says the sufferer, in a quavering voice, "I have not seen since—since I was sent to that cursed place. He passed close by the house. He was going to the jetty with some boating-party."

"Who was it, papa?"

"He was a close and true friend of mine in the good old days. His hair is gray now. It was George Carlyon. Carlyon Manor is close to here."

"He didn't see you, papa?"

"No, my dear. Nor would he have recognized in this feeble, worn-out old body the gay Charley Hatherly of yore. Listen, Phillis. If the worst should happen to me, and—"

"Oh, dear papa, don't talk so!" she cries, flinging her arms round her father tenderly. "You're going to get well, and strong, and hearty soon again, for my sake."

"We'll hope so, love. But if you should get in straits, and not have a friend to turn to, mind, *don't go to Garlapel, Phillis*. I distrust that man, somehow; go to my old friend, Carlyon. Tell him all about me, who you are, and, unless I have much mistaken the man, he will assist you."

Phillis promises her father to do so. Presently she is obliged to take leave of him. She bears up with her brave little heart till she is out of the house, but she can hardly see her way down the garden-walk, so blinded are her eyes with tears.

It has been arranged that Mrs. Surle and her daughter Bessie shall nurse the patients, and Phillis is to find some one else to wait upon her at the theater. She has not time to do this before the performance, so for this night she will have to do without.

She plays the vivacious heroine in the sparkling comedy with a heavy heart that evening. The applause that greets her is as genuine and enthusiastic as ever, but it rings reproachfully in her ears. Try as she will, she cannot quite throw off the burden of her trouble, and do herself justice.

"Our brilliant *Lady Vivien* flags a little this evening," simpers Miss Pet Hamilton, disparagingly, to the stage-manager, as they stand at the wings. "Do you know, Mr. Chump, I think she has gone off a great deal—seems to have lost the 'go' she had at first. She never did have much, it's true."

"Brum-brum!" growls the stage-manager. "Takes with the public as much as ever, and that's more than some folks do."

This was one for Miss Pet, who used to shine as a star of the first magnitude until Miss May Audley came to eclipse her. So Miss Pet tosses her pretty head with a snort, and is just retiring in a huff, when something occurs to stay her.

The last act is on, and *Lady Vivien* is going through an exceedingly pathetic passage with a perverse but repentant brother, who has caused her a good deal of distress for two-thirds of her ephemeral existence.

She is shedding her tears of joy on *Marmaduke's* neck when, happening to cast her eyes over his shoulder, they meet those of a gentleman who a few minutes before has entered the stage-box opposite her.

To his surprise, *Marmaduke* feels her start in his arms, and then collapse onto the boards, pulling him down almost onto his knees with her dead weight.

This is not in the "business" at all; but the audience look upon it as a capital bit of acting, and applaud accordingly, while the unfortunate brother hangs over his sister in the throes of very real distraction.

"What the deuce is she up to?" exclaims Mr. Chump, angrily. "That's not the place where—"

"She fainted!" gasps *Marmaduke*, bending lower, as if he were murmuring sweet words in her ear.

"Stage-struck, more likely!" jeers Miss Pet.

The curtain is rung down, and then the inanimate form of the *Lady Vivien*, otherwise Phillis Hatherly, is gently carried off the stage and laid upon a couch. Willing hands tend upon her, Mr. Chump brings his private brandy-flask in his anxiety for her speedy recovery, and even Miss Pet goes down on her knees to bathe the cold white brow.

While everybody is intent on the process of restoration, the door leading from the front of the house to behind the scenes is pushed slowly open, and the real cause of this disturbance—the inmate of the stage-box—appears.

He stands looking down coldly on Phillis, unnoticed in the confusion.

"Go and get Jeffries to apologize for her, and call it 'sudden indisposition!'" exclaims Mr. Chump, resignedly, to one of the on-lookers. "It's no use keeping them waiting. She won't be right for going on any more to-night."

"Nor any other night, either," says a deep voice in front of him.

The stage manager stares at the speaker with honest amazement.

"Hullo!" he says. "And pray where do you come from? Are you concerned at all with this young lady?"

"In so far that I am her guardian. She left me some time since, and I have been looking

please, to call at my hotel, the 'Brunswick,' to-morrow morning."

"But there's five hundred dollars forfeit-money if the engagement's broken!" says the stage-manager, aghast.

for her everywhere. Now that I have found her I will be answerable for her future doings."

Consternation is depicted on Mr. Chump's visage, and there is a commotion among those present.

"Comel how am I to know you're Miss Audley's guardian?" exclaims Mr. Chump, recovering himself somewhat. "You'll have to prove it first, I tell you."

"She is coming to. Wait and hear what she says," is the calm reply.

A faint color dyes the pale cheeks, from which the paint has been wiped, the parted lips quiver fitfully, and with a deep drawn sigh, the brown eyes open and gaze round with the dim light of returning consciousness in them.

As they fall on Gideon Garlapel she half raises herself shudderingly, with a low moan, as if she would escape the sight of him.

"Are you better, dear?" asks Miss Pet, more kindly than she has spoken hitherto.

And other inquiries and wishes for her speedy recovery are addressed to her by the little group as she sits up.

"Here's a gentleman, Miss Audley," then says Mr. Chump, indicating Garlapel, "who declares he's your gardian. He wants to take you away with him. Is this so?"

She feels very weak, and looks up at those round her in a yearning, pitiful way, as if supplicating for help, or some means of escape.

"If this is not true, just say so!" adds Mr. Chump, firmly. "I and Mrs. Chump'll take care of you; and there's no fear of his carrying you off then."

But Gideon Garlapel stoops down a moment and whispers something in her ear.

"If you wish to save your father, Phillis, come with me immediately!"

A flood of recollections sweeps over her then. Her father is ill—perhaps worse—in the hands of the police—in want of her. She must go to him."

"It is quite true," she says, with feverish eagerness, and rising. "This gentleman is Mr. Garlapel, my guardian, as he says. I must go with him. Let me go at once!"

Mr. Chump offers no further remonstrance. While Phillis is preparing in her dressing-room, he is drawn aside by Mr. Garlapel.

"With whom shall I have to make arrangements about concluding Miss Audley's engagement?" asks Gideon.

"Mr. Drake's the party, sir. But you don't mean it, surely—"

"Most certainly I do. Request Mr. Drake,

"It shall be paid down," returns Mr Garlapel, coldly.

Phillis emerges from her room. A thick veil hides her white features, but not the eager shine of her dark eyes. She lets Mr. Garlapel conduct her out of the theater. At the stage-door a carriage is waiting, into which he shows her, and then takes his seat beside her.

They roll away through the dark streets in silence. Presently they draw up in front of a building from whose lower windows the light streams forth broadly.

"Where are you taking me, cousin Gideon?" says Phillis, tremulously.

"This is my hotel, where I shall engage apartments for you."

"But my father, Gideon? I thought you were taking me to him. He is very ill. I must go to him!"

"Listen to me, Phillis!" he adds, in a threatening whisper, as the carriage door is opened. "You're in my power! Do as I tell you, or it will be worse for you—and your father!"

And he clasps her arm firmly, painfully almost, and hurries her into the hotel, while she is too bewildered to resist. He stays to give some instructions to a waiter, and in that moment it flashes across her that he is in ignorance of her father's hiding-place; that she must not betray it; that probably what he said at the theater was a mere subterfuge to induce her to go with him.

The waiter precedes them up the wide, carpeted staircase, to a handsome sitting-room, after lighting up which he retires.

"Take off your things and sit down, Phillis," says Gideon, in a kinder tone, drawing forward a couch for her. "You shall have some supper and a glass of wine in a few minutes. Where have you been staying?—what hotel, I mean?"

"At the 'Eastman,'" she answers, obeying him mechanically. She is wondering what she shall do about her father—is he any worse?—how she can let Mrs. Surle know what has befallen her? What policy she shall pursue toward Gideon? Open resistance, she feels, would be worse than useless; it would endanger her father's safety.

"I will send over for your baggage at once, and settle your bill there. Have you any maid—any one to look after you, Phillis?"

"Yes, Mrs.— That is to say, an old woman has been with me, but she has left me to-day."

"And just as well," says Mr. Garlapel, as the waiter enters with the supper things.

Phillis cannot be induced to eat; she is too anxious for that. But at Gideon's entreaty, she takes a little wine.

"Now, Phillis," he says, affably, "I propose that nothing be discussed to-night. Time

enough for that in the morning. You look tired. Your rooms are ready for you when you like."

"But I cannot rest in this uncertainty, Gideon. You have found me again, but do you mean to keep me prisoner? For if you persist in making me live where you are, it comes to that."

He takes one or two turns up and down the room moodily without replying to her, then taking his stand by the mantelpiece, rests his arm on it, and looks down on her.

"If you will enter into the subject, Phillis, of course I can't help it," he says, with a return of his hard tone. "I would rather have spared you for the present."

"And I would rather come to an understanding at once, Gideon."

Phillis feels her spirit rising within her as the desperate condition of her hopes and her situation becomes clearer to her.

"Very well. If that's the case I must just speak out what I thought it better to reserve for awhile. In the first place, Phillis, I know that you have found out the secret about your father, which I had kept from you. I know, too, that he has escaped from the prison he so richly deserved, that you left Dearn with him, and that you are supporting him now. I have no doubt he is the cause of your present anxiety. Knowing all this, you may understand why I desired to find you, and now wish to withhold you—willful as you are—from this vicious influence. It is my duty."

"I cannot sit here and let you speak thus of my poor father!" exclaims Phillis, rising, with flashing eyes and a hot flush in her pale cheeks. "I believe him to be as innocent of the crime he is charged with as you are; and soon we trust to be able to prove it before the world. A great detective has taken up his case without payment, so strongly does he believe in my father's innocence."

"If I come across the detective I'll charge him with being party to the escape of a convict!" returns Gideon, with a savage light smoldering in his eyes. "It's felony! And, mind you, you're open to the same charge, Phillis, for what you've been doing. But the man Hatherly shall not go free long! I've got Scorpe, the best man in London, on his track!"

"Scorpe! Not Matthew Scorpe, the detective?"

"The very same!"

"Why, he's the man—"

Then Phillis suddenly comes to a stop, and recollects herself. But Garlapel, standing opposite her, turns deadly pale, even to his lips.

"The scoundrel!" he mutters between his set teeth. "So *this* is the double game he's playing me! But I'll be even with him yet!"

Phillis leans back on the couch in bewilderment and astonishment. What does it mean? Is this Scorpe deceiving them? If so, why has he not denounced Charles Hatherly before? It occurs to her now, there has always been something repugnant to her in the man's way, something untrustworthy beneath his blandness.

"But I warn you, Phillis," breaks in Garlapel, on her thoughts, "before to-morrow is over I shall know where this convict is, with or without Scorpe's aid. Of one thing I am certain; he's in the neighborhood somewhere, and I'll find him if I have to set the police to work."

"Oh, Gideon, you cannot be so cruel!" she beseeches, dismayed by his threat. "Why are you so pitiless toward my poor father? Cannot you forgive him yet for that wrong he did you so many years ago? He owns himself it *was* a wrong."

"It was a great wrong. It ruined my happiness. Why should I spare him, irrespective of my duty? He didn't spare me. And yet, Phillis, there is one condition on which I might be more considerate—not for him, never!—but for his daughter's happiness. Do you know what that is?"

She shakes her head mutely, but with a great dread, for she understands his meaning.

"You remember what I said to you once? I could be considerate for the father of the woman I call 'wife.' I could even be willing—though myself believing him to be a guilty man—to further any endeavor to prove him innocent, and to assist him abroad meanwhile. Do you follow me, Phillis?"

That she does so is evident; but, as he leans toward her, she cannot meet the glow of those fierce dark eyes of his any longer; and, turning from him, she buries her face in the cushions of the couch, while her slender frame is convulsed with sobs.

The worst she dreaded has come. To save her father she must sacrifice herself. And yet no great sacrifice, she thinks, with that yawning gulf between her and love. And she strives to keep down the flood of tender recollections that sweeps over her at the bare thought of Cyril Dearn. Where is he? she wonders. Can he have quite forgotten so soon?

There is a hand on her shoulder, and she raises herself. Garlapel is bending low over her, and his looks demand an answer.

"If, Gideon," she says, in a low, suppressed voice, "you mean to marry a woman who—who has bestowed her heart on another man, expecting to find happiness with her, then—then I must submit."

"One moment, Phillis. Cherish no false hopes about Cyril Dearn—who, by the way, is now a gay, wealthy, and courted member of

society. Men's hearts are not like you women's, even the best of them. I saw Dearn the morning after your flight. He inquired about you, and I was obliged to tell him all I knew. He was in love, no doubt; but—you can understand, Phillis—Dearn is a man of the world."

Did she believe him? In her heart of hearts she did not. Yet there was one moment of bitter doubt when she felt her love had been wasted—cast to the winds. His merciless words stung her to a mad impulse.

"I will marry you, Gideon; but—but not yet!"

"It must be quickly, Phillis—within a week, or not at all."

"Have you no mercy? Cannot you be content with my word?" she cries, facing him with a red, feverish spot on each cheek.

"I have reasons—very urgent reasons—why it should be at once, Phillis. Remember, until you're my wife I can do nothing for your father."

"I must obey you, I suppose. I am your slave henceforth. Do as you like."

He makes no display of his affection. He understands, no doubt, that in accepting him she does it with scorn. She rises calmly, and walks away from him. Phillis in these few minutes seems transformed from a sweet, lovable girl into a haughty, disdainful woman.

"To-morrow you will be prepared to start for Dearn Park, Phillis."

"I may see my father first?" she says, loftily, from the middle of the room.

"You may, and make any arrangements with him you choose."

"Thank you. If that is all you have to say, I can go to bed now, then?"

"Certainly," and he rings the bell.

When the attendant comes she bids him good-night, coldly, without approaching him even, as he stands in his old position by the mantelpiece. Then she leaves him to himself.

CHAPTER IX.

A FORCED AGREEMENT.

MR. GARLAPEL, on the following morning, takes his breakfast alone. In reply to his inquiry, Phillis sends word she is not very well, and will breakfast in her room; also, if a letter comes for her, she would like to have it at once.

In the course of the morning Mr. Drake arrives on the scene.

On Mr. Garlapel's informing him that Miss Audley is a young lady who has taken to the stage in opposition to her friends' wishes, and on his paying up handsomely all the demands incident to the broken engagement, Mr. Drake departs again, well satisfied.

By-and-by a letter does arrive for Miss Aud-

ley, forwarded from the "Eastman." As Phillis has not yet put in an appearance, Gideon calmly opens it. It contains only a rather dirty slip of paper, on which is scrawled:—

"Mr. Audley is much about the same; no worse, the doctor says. He sends his love. But we are in great trouble. My poor brother is dying, they say."

"BESSIE S."

"Not much to make out of this," Mr. Garlapel thinks. No address to tell from where it was written. Who can "Bessie S." be, and what interest can Phillis have in her brother? However, he restores the letter to its mutilated covering, and puts them both in a large envelope, on the flap of which he writes that it has been opened by himself, and then sends it up to Phillis.

The morning-room in which he is sitting is built in an angle of the hotel so that it has windows on one side overlooking the road, and on the adjoining side French windows opening onto a flight of steps. This leads to a smooth lawn-terrace, from which a fine view of the Hudson is obtained. Beyond the terrace stretch lawn, and garden, and shrubbery, right away to the river side, with which they have communication.

Mr. Garlapel happens to be standing at the open window, perhaps in enjoyment of the scene, for in the mild April sunshine it is full of charm and color, when his attention is attracted by a portly looking man threading his way along the garden-path, toward the terrace.

"That rascal, Scorpe!" he ejaculates. "Why the deuce is he here again? I'll just settle his matter now."

He beckons the detective to come up the steps.

Mr. Scorpe has evidently approached with the intention of so doing, having been the first to make the mutual recognition.

"Well, Scorpe," says Mr. Garlapel, in his usual manner, when the detective has entered the room, "any news yet?"

"Nothing very particular," returns Mr. Scorpe, with his bland smile. "And you, sir?—have you anything of importance concerning our case to communicate?"

"I have. Miss Hatherly is at the present moment lodged under this roof in my charge. She has been in this town at least a week."

"Yes; I heard that Miss Audley's quarters had been transferred from the 'Eastman' to here at your request," Mr. Scorpe says, gently. "I did not mention it, because it could be no news to you."

Mr. Garlapel glares at the detective's inscrutable features, and there is a pause before he speaks.

"Now, look here, Scorpe!" he says, pale with anger. "I don't want any of the low

tricks of your trade practiced on me. I'm just going to sum you up in three words—you're a scoundrell—you've been playing a double game. You've not only deceived me, and been drawing my money on the false pretense of finding this Hatherly, but you've done the same by him. What do you mean by it?"

Mr. Scorpe slowly shakes his head, as if politely deprecating his client's wrath. But he seems to have no answer.

"I'll tell you what," continues Mr. Garlapel, more incensed still; "unless you can give a very good account of yourself, I shall just hand you over to the police for being concerned in the escape of a convict! You know what that means."

"One moment, Mr. Garlapel," puts in Mr. Scorpe, suavely. "Are there no other discoveries in connection with this matter that you have made—discoveries, for instance, in connection with the crime Mr. Hatherly was supposed to have committed, and of which he was found guilty?"

"What do you mean, you rascal?"

"Hard words—hard words never do any good, Mr. Garlapel. I mean this. Perhaps you are not aware I have been engaged in Mr. Hatherly's interest, in an endeavor to prove his innocence?"

"A fool's game! What has it to do with me?"

"My investigations lead me think it may affect you considerably, Mr. Garlapel. At present Mr. H. is in ignorance how far they have gone, but I can tell you they have been amply sufficient to clear him of all guilt."

"I don't believe it; and—and again, what the deuce has this to do with me?"

"I am coming to that now. Not only can I prove him innocent, but I am able to put my finger on the man who should be in his place—the man who did the deed! I think you must be aware now how much the matter concerns you."

Gideon Garlapel's pale face grows discolored and livid as he listens, and his breath comes heavily and slowly.

Mr. Scorpe is watching him with stealthy leer from beneath his beetling brows.

"Permit me to beg you to consider first," adds the detective, raising his hands entreatingly to anticipate the other's speech. "There is no need to mention names to specify the guilty party. I am here with the most amiable intentions, and don't wish to make unnecessary trouble. There is only one little fact I need mention, in proof of my ability to do what I said:—In the course of my search, I have come across one Ben Surle, and his secrets are my secrets."

"Ben Surle alive! It's a lie!" gasps Mr. Garlapel, with fierce emphasis.

Mr. Scorpe shrugs his shoulders as if he had

to deal with a man very obdurate to conviction.

"You say that, probably, because, in the first place, you think you have good cause to believe him dead; and in the second, you think if he were not, you would have heard of him before now. The fact is, Mr. Garlapel, Ben Surle escaped that very strange and unaccountable tumble he had on that night ten years ago, only to lay for a long time partly unconscious, and even now he is unable to get about his work as he used to do. But, he has quite wits enough to remember all about the Ladye-Bird, and to tell the secret—preserved from every one so far—to a good bidder, which I have been. Now let me pray you to be a little reasonable, Mr. Garlapel," continues the artful detective, considerably, "and take your time to think the matter over. I am sure we shall be able to come to some little arrangement that will not necessitate any unpleasantness between us."

And he turns away generously to a window, to allow his late client the opportunity of recovering himself unwatched. Mr. Garlapel seems inclined to avail himself of this, and falls into his favorite attitude of leaning on the mantelpiece.

When, after a prolonged silence, Mr. Scorpe looks round, he seems, from the smile on his countenance, of the opinion that so far he has carried the day.

"Well, Mr. Garlapel, and have we come to any little decision as to what is best to do under the circumstances?" he asks, in a matter-of-fact way.

"What do you want, Scorpe?" is the abrupt demand, without facing round from the mantelpiece. "Money?"

Mr. Scorpe signifies that that commodity will satisfy him as an equivalent for keeping their "little secret," and they fall to business forthwith.

With the details of the agreement that is entered into between this pair of rogues we have nothing to do. Suffice it to say that a large sum is to be transferred from one to the other—so large that Mr. Garlapel has to ask a week's grace to raise it in, during which time Mr. Scorpe thoughtfully offers to give him the benefit of his company.

This end is not arrived at without some haggling, and sundry assurances and explanations on the detective's part.

"And now let me ask you," proceeds Mr. Scorpe, pleasantly, "why you have so mistrusted me the last few weeks, so as to have me followed—my steps dogged, as it were, by that foreign-looking individual? A cool and 'cute hand, it is true, but I flatter myself the man isn't born who can play that little game off on Matt Scorpe!"

"I haven't had you followed!" returned Mr. Garlapel, surprised.

"You haven't? You really mean it, sir?"

"Certainly, no one has watched you by my instructions."

Mr. Scorpe raises his heavy eyebrows and shakes his head mysteriously. Then, with his usual acumen, he goes straight at the truth.

"Who was that party you told me of once—fond of Miss H., I think?"

"Cyril Dearn! Yes, he told me he should never rest till he had found her."

"The man, sure enough! He's been playing a deep game! Had you and me followed—I can't understand that! Why hasn't he dropped on the Hatherlys before this? Anyway, you marry her within the week, you say, sir? Then we must keep him off somehow for that time. It'll be a close shave. Are you sure she's all safe? No fear of her escaping out of the place?"

"Not the least fear, I think. Where can she go to? Her father's ill, I hear. Besides, I have a hold on her by threatening to inform the police about him."

"Good! I've got a man down here, and I'll just post him close by in case of accidents. We had better get to Dearn as soon as we can, Mr. Garlapel. Once there, you can defy a dozen young sparks. I'm going down now to see what's the matter with Hatherly, and pick up any news. I shall be back soon."

And the portly detective, whose energies seem fully aroused by the occasion, hurries away. Mr. Garlapel summons his valet, and bids him pack and prepare to leave at once.

Another half-hour passes, and then, surprised at Phillis not making her appearance, he is just sending up to inquire about her, when a waiter brings a folded soiled card to him. On its front is printed "Matthew Scorpe," and scrawled in pencil on the back is—"The young leddy I was to keep an eye on has just gone out."

With a muttered oath, Mr. Garlapel snatches up his hat and rushes out into the entrance-hall of the hotel.

CHAPTER X.

MEMORY AWAKENED.

EARLY that same morning there are visitors at Mrs. Surle's—a dapper little man, with a cheerful face, and a tall gentleman, good-looking—Denny and his employer.

"Good-morning, ma'am!" says the little man, blithely. "Fine day! We have called respecting our friend, Mr. Scorpe. Has he been here?"

"Not yet, sir," returns Mrs. Surle, taken off her guard somewhat. "He is expected every minute by—by some one. Perhaps you know—"

"Yes, yes; just so, my dear ma'am. We know all about it, through Mr. Scorpe, of course. By the way, Mrs. Surle, you look in trouble. Anything the matter—eh?"

"Yes, sir; my poor son Ben is ill with a fever, and the doctor gives no hopes of him. He's up there now."

"Oh, dear, that's very sad," consoles Mr. Denny, shaking his head solemnly. "And is no one else ill with the fever?"

"The gentleman, sir; but only slightly."

"Ah, yes; the gentlemen named—named—Dear me, I've forgotten!"

"Audley," puts in Mrs. Surle.

Doctor Leigh enters, with a grave face.

In reply to Mrs. Surle's sobbing inquiry, he reports that her son's time has come; he is past human skill.

"And Mr. Audley, doctor?" says Mr. Denny.

"This gentleman and myself have come a long way with the hope of seeing him."

"Well, you must be careful, gentlemen. I should be grieved for Mr. Audley to have a relapse, if only for his charming daughter's sake."

"His daughter! Is she with him?" exclaims Cyril.

"No; she is obliged to keep away from here in consideration of those she is brought in contact with."

"And they are—" gasps the excited lover.

"The other members of the company. You are aware she is an actress, I suppose, sir?"

Cyril recoils, with his nether lip between his teeth.

This is what she has come to, then, the brave girl—to earn her father's bread and her own!

Cyril speaks aside to the little detective, and in a minute or two stands alone at the sick man's bedside.

"I come as a friend, Mr. Hatherly, and with the best intentions," he says, gently. "Do not be alarmed. I know your story, and believe in your innocence. In fact, more; I have hopes of being able to prove it."

"I don't know who you are," Hatherly says, in quavering tones; "but you're very kind, sir."

"You shall know who I am in a few minutes, Mr. Hatherly; but, first and foremost, have you any information to give me? I have a trustworthy detective below."

"There is one thing all-important, sir"—raising himself to speak more collectedly. "I have every reason to believe that the man who is dying in the adjoining room is the same man who rowed the boat out to the Ladye-Bird on that fatal night, and whom we afterward pursued."

"Have you taken his evidence?" asks Cyril, breathlessly.

"He is imbecile mentally, sir, and has been

so ever since that night. And the secret of that crime lies with that man."

"Stay a moment, Mr. Hatherly."

And Cyril goes out to the head of the little staircase and calls softly for Denny, who comes to him. A few hurried words of explanation, and the little detective decides he must gain admission to Ben Surle at all risks.

Further conversation follows between Cyril and Charles Hatherly, in the course of which he finds out Phillis's address. A quarter of an hour later he is on his way to the "Eastman," every nerve thrilling with eager anticipation and pleasure.

Mr. Denny softly enters the room where the dying man is, his mother and sister hanging tearfully over him.

So far, portly Mr. Scorpe has certainly been in the wrong when he told Gideon Garlapel that poor Ben Surle had wits enough to sell any secret. But then, perhaps that wily detective arranged the facts to suit his own convenience, and with no particular regard for the truth.

Bessie, looking at her brother, is suddenly startled by the new light in the usually dull eyes, and the changed expression of the stolid features.

"Where's father?" he presently asks.

Mrs. Surle gazes at him with awed surprise.

"Father, Ben?" says Bessie, on whom the truth is dawning. "Do you remember him, brother? He has been dead this eight years!"

"Dead?" A bewilderment, that has the light of puzzled intelligence in it, is in his eyes. "Father dead? Where ha' I been then, mother? I know you; you are the same. And you, Bessie. But I—I forget—"

"Ben," his mother says, tremulously, "do you mind your father?—do you mind him, boy, at last? And your dead brother John, and the boat Nancy he was drowned in? Oh, Ben, Ben, can you mind them all?"

"I mind them all, mother," falls from him in broken whispers. "I mind them through a dream, like. But who is here? Who's you?"

He has observed Mr. Denny. The little detective has been closely watching the scene, and coming forward now, says in a low, feeling tone, "Will you pardon my asking your son a question, Mrs. Surle? I would not intrude at this solemn time, but that it affects the life and happiness of one you know—Mr. Audley. Your son only can tell the truth." Then, addressing himself to Ben, he continues, "Do you remember—try back in your memory, I implore you, Mr. Surle—a certain dark night, on which you rowed a man out to a yacht called the Ladye-Bird?"

A dazed look comes into the pallid face of the dying man, and then a sudden gleam of horror and apprehension.

"I mind it" he gasps, shudderingly. "I mind the man now, and the night, and what I saw—"

"Stay a moment," says Mr. Denny. "Did you go on board the yacht that night?"

"No; but I lay off, and saw him that went on, and—and what he did."

"That's enough." And Mr. Denny goes to the door. "I'll be back in a moment."

He runs lightly down-stairs, and out of the house. There is a foreign-looking man lounging about the garden, waiting for him evidently.

"Did you find who was the nearest magistrate, Povitski?" he pants, breathing with haste.

"Yessir. Mayor Carlyon; he lif close to here."

"Take this to him, then," producing a card from his pocketbook, and writing on it in pencil.

The foreigner hurries away, and Mr. Denny returns to the house.

A change has come over the sufferer. Agitation and excitement, the result of memories stirred up within him after these long years, have lent him new strength.

"Can you tell me the name of the man you rowed to the yacht?" asks Mr. Denny.

"I don't rightly know, sir. I—I don't mind— Hal was it Barnes? That's it, sir— Barnes!"

Mr. Denny shakes his head, doubtfully.

"A dark, ill-looking man," pursued Ben, hoarsely, and with feverish eagerness; "and he hit me over the skull with that iron box, and I fell. I mind it like it were last night. And, yes, his name might ha' been something else. He dropped his pocketbook, and I kept it, I mind, for to get his right name."

"Where is the pocketbook?" demands Mr. Denny.

Ben looks blankly at his mother, who has been listening in amazement.

She seems to understand he is appealing to her. Suddenly she starts, and exclaims: "Pocketbook, Ben? There was one. I found it on you when they brought you home so like to dead. I thought it was yourn, Ben, being no scholar, and put it away 'gainst the time you might want it."

CHAPTER XL

RIGHTED AT LAST.

"SHE ain't been gone three minutes, sir," says the man whom Gideon Garlapel almost rushes against in the piazza of the hotel. "She went straight up the road; and when you get to the turn, most like you will see her."

He hurries on; and, arriving at the corner, there is Phillis, some distance in front, walking

away quickly. Mr. Scorpe suddenly appears, coming from the opposite direction toward her.

She seems desirous of passing him without bestowing the least recognition on him; but he plants his portly person in front of her and takes her hand, apparently with the most kindly interest in her welfare. Though she resents this impertinence by starting back from him angrily, he still manages to detain her without attracting the attention of a passer-by until Mr. Garlapel comes up.

"What does this mean, Phillis?" inquires the latter, sternly.

Phillis colors up with a defiant look, but she says nothing.

"You will accompany me back to the hotel immediately, please."

"I wish to go and see my father, according to our arrangement," she returns as firmly as she can.

"But, my dear young lady," puts in Mr. Scorpe, affably, "I have just been to call on Mr. Hatherly, and I hear he is ill with fever—a very infectious fever, too. It surely won't do for you to go there."

"Certainly not!" says Mr. Garlapel. "Come, Phillis, you must take my arm and return at once."

Having no alternative, she does so with a heavy heart. She looks very pale and weary this morning, after the sleepless night she has passed.

On the way, the detective signifies to Mr. Garlapel in a whisper that he has some very important news for his private ear. So when they are again in the morning-room occupied by Mr. Garlapel, that gentleman, desirous of being where he can keep his eye on Phillis, goes out onto the terrace, followed by Mr. Scorpe.

"What is it, Scorpe?"

"That man Dearn is in Yonkers. He has called on Hatherly—was still with him when I was there, and we may be sure won't be long finding his way here."

"Then we must be off at once!" exclaims Mr. Garlapel, with a savage scowl. "When does the next train leave here—for anywhere?"

"There's the express for New York starts in five-and-twenty minutes," says Mr. Scorpe, consulting his watch.

"We can just do it. It's a safe move, and we can still get down to Dearn to-night from town. I wouldn't have her meet that man now for anything; he might spoil all."

When they enter the room again, Phillis is lying back in an arm-chair, still dressed in her out-door costume.

"Phillis, I find it necessary to start at once," says Mr. Garlapel, peremptorily. "You must leave your baggage if it isn't ready, and it can

be sent on. The train starts in a few minutes. Come!"

Surprise and resistance are depicted on the face she turns to him.

"I understood you were not going till this afternoon," she returns, steadily.

"The arrangement is altered. We are going now."

"I am not going till I have seen or heard direct from my father."

"My dear Miss Hatherly," interposes Mr. Scorpe again, "I neglected my duty in not informing you that when I inquired about your father he specially sent word to you through myself that you were not to distress yourself about him; the doctor is satisfied with the progress of the disease, and he is being well and carefully attended to."

"Mr. Scorpe, I don't trust you, and won't have anything to do with you," is her rejoinder. "I wish to hear from my father about something else besides his health, and until I do I don't leave here."

A heavy, cruel frown gathers about Gideon Garlapel's dark features as he watches her brown eyes light with sudden fire and resolution.

"Now listen to me, Phillis," he says, in suppressed tones. "We have only a very few minutes to spare, and those you're wasting. I mean you to go with me somehow. If you make any further resistance, Scorpe here goes to the police at once to lodge an information against your father."

"He may do so," she returns, paling slightly, but still defiantly. "Your cowardly threats shall not move me! Nothing but brute force shall tear me away, and that you dare not use!"

"We shall see," mutters Garlapel, savagely, between his set teeth, and advancing on her.

She sits and faces him unflinchingly, and clasping the chair-arm with both hands. At that moment Mr. Scorpe's voice comes between.

"Excuse me, Mr. Garlapel, but before you do anything unseemly, will you give me a moment's attention?"

Mr. Garlapel crosses the room scowlingly to where the detective stands, close by the door; then some whispering ensues between them, and Mr. Scorpe goes out of the room.

A minute or two passes in silence, and Mr. Garlapel stands with his watch in his hand, waiting.

"I wish, Mr. Garlapel, to be permitted either to go to where my father lodges or to send a trusty messenger," says Phillis, then.

"You will remain where you are till Scorpe returns; he may have something to tell you," is the curt rejoinder.

The precious minutes pass—four, five, six—then the detective enters with an airy manner,

and a quick glance at Mr. Garlapel. His hand is tucked away in a pocket behind him, curiously. Approaching Phillis, he says: "I have the pleasure of informing you, my dear Miss Hatherly—"

It is done and over in a minute. His hand, with a handkerchief, is pressed to her mouth and nostrils. She starts up with a little choking scream, slightly struggles and gasps in his arms, and then slips down into the chair, lifeless apparently. Truly, Mr. Scorpe's resources are wonderful!

"Chloroform's a capital thing at times," he says to Mr. Garlapel, who has been looking on grimly. "Wrap that cloak round her; and here's a heavy veil to hide her face. I've got a cab waiting at the side-door. When we take her out at the station we must say she's fainted. We've only twelve minutes, so there won't be much time for inquiry."

There is a knock, and a waiter enters with a card on a salver.

"Cyril Dearn!" gasps Mr. Garlapel, while the waiter stares at the inanimate form of Phillis. "Tell him I'm engaged; but in ten minutes I shall be at liberty to see him."

But the man has only just retired when hurried footsteps are heard, the door is flung violently open again, and Cyril rushes in.

"What do you want here, sir?" cried Mr. Garlapel, with a furious oath.

"Stay, stay, until I have taken my poor sister out onto the terrace," entreats wily Mr. Scorpe, lifting Phillis, closely veiled and cloaked, in his arms. "The fresh air there will revive her, perhaps."

Cyril regards this proceeding suspiciously; but how should he recognize the beloved form concealed under this amount of clothing? Mr. Scorpe effects his object, and disappears with his burden down the steps, while Mr. Garlapel repeats his question with yet more furious vehemence.

"I wish to see Miss Hatherly," returns Cyril, promptly. "I wish to know if she is here of her own free will."

"By what authority do you ask?"

"The very best—her father's!"

"What! that runaway convict! If that is all, you have come on a foolish errand Mr. Dearn. But my time is precious; I must go."

And taking up his hat, he makes for the door.

"You shall not leave this room, Mr. Garlapel, until you tell me where Miss Hatherly is to be found!" exclaims Cyril, placing himself in the way, determinedly.

"I shall do nothing of the sort!"

"Then I shall be under the painful necessity of detaining you here while Denny, my detective, has the house searched. I have every right to do this. From inquiries I have made,

I believe you are holding Miss Hatherly by force."

"Let me pass, fool!"

"I shall not!"

Mr. Garlapel, seeing his adversary between the door and himself makes a rush for the open window.

Cyril is on him as he reaches it, and a struggle seems imminent. But, coming up the steps from the terrace are two men, who effectually bar the way, and at the same moment Mr. Denny enters by the door, accompanied by a gray-haired gentleman of upright and dignified mien.

"Which is Garlapel?" inquires the gray-haired gentleman of Mr. Denny.

"I am," answers Mr. Garlapel, now released by Cyril.

"Then, Gideon Garlapel, you are charged with the murder of one Ralph Garlapel, some ten years since, and you are apprehended on a warrant issued this day by me, George Carlyon, mayor. Take him in charge, officer."

An indescribable look of desperation and ashen fear comes over the guilty man as one of the men, who have entered by the window, advances with the handcuffs. But he does not seem to lose his presence of mind, for, as the officer links his own left wrist to his prisoner's right one, he says, with well-simulated indignation and contempt:

"And pray what has been the cause of this precious farce? I warn you, George Carlyon, it is no light matter to arrest a man of influence and position in this country on such a charge as this."

"To-morrow you will have a hearing," returns the mayor, inclining his head. "Meanwhile, I can inform you that I have just come from the death-bed of Benjamin Surle, who quite recovered his sanity and intelligence before his death. He made a detailed deposition, the result of which is this arrest. To further support his evidence, he had a pocketbook which you dropped, and he took possession of. When he was found the following morning, it was on him; but his mother thought it was her son's, and put it away. It is in my keeping now."

Gideon Garlapel seems stunned by this last intelligence; and his eyes wander with a stony expression from face to face.

Suddenly he asks:

"And where is Hatherly?—have you seen him?—the man who was convicted by the law of the crime I am charged with?"

"I have seen him," is the quiet rejoinder.

"He is too ill to be removed."

"Will you allow me to ask the prisoner where Miss Hatherly is?" says Cyril, who has been a silent spectator of the scene, coming

forward. "I have good reason to believe he knows."

"Ah, Mr. Dearn," exclaims Mr. Denny, "I am glad to assure you she is safe, so far. That clever villain, Scorpe, had chloroformed her, and was just carrying her off when we arrived. He escaped; but the police are on the track."

"Then it was Scorpe and Phillis I saw here! Where is she, man?—what is being done with her?" cries Cyril, in a state of mad excitement.

"She was carried into the hotel, and doctors were summoned," returns Mr. Denny. "If you'll come with me, sir, I can take you to her."

When Phillis recovers consciousness she is lying on a couch in a room she does not remember. She comes back from her dream-land to find earnest, loving eyes gazing down on her so tenderly that she thinks it must be a sweet dream, and closes her own eyes again not to lose it, and finds it gone. This is a reversal of the usual order of things, so when she sees them still gazing at her she begins to think, with a thrill, that they must be reality.

Doctors and others hover round her—fuss about—advise this and that—prop her up with pillows; but they seem all shadowy personages compared with this one. Presently they are alone—she and the one she cannot help loving if she would.

"My darling, you have been very cruel to send me away, and not to let me share your trouble and help you bear it."

She shudders, and the tears rise in her eyes, full of the soft, sweet light of love, and he kisses her lips as if he would kiss the tears away.

"You must not, Cyril—dear Cyril!"—and she tries, but not much, to turn her head away. "We are apart, and ever must be, while this trouble is over me."

Then he tells her all, gently and fondly; of her father's innocence; of that wretched prisoner; of his constant and loving pursuit; and, lastly, and above all, of his heart's true and steadfast devotion.

"There will be no Mrs. Dearn, if you are not she, my love. Will you be? Nay, I need no answer. You shall be!"

And she is so weak, she does not resist when he takes her in his arms, and pillows her gentle head on his shoulder. And oh! for the sweet murmured words of young love, that move two fond hearts with a subtle happiness that shall not be intruded on here.

* * * * *

Gideon Garlapel was never brought to trial. He died in prison by poison, concealed about his person, no doubt, in case of this very emergency, and administered by his own hand. And so, even after long years, his guilt found him out, and he perished miserably.

On his table he left a confession of his crime, roughly scrawled in pencil, in which he said that when he went out from the Jersey shore that night to the yacht under the name of Barnes, any murderous designs that might have been in his heart were directed against Charles Hatherly, the man who had robbed him of his intended wife. But when he overheard his uncle's words about the will he conceived the diabolical plot by which Charles Hatherly was to suffer, and did suffer. The attempt on the life of poor Ben Surle was to secure his own safety.

He did not say anything about the will which he took away in the iron box, and by the disappearance of which he was able to enjoy his uncle's property as next of kin. But when his papers were gone over at Dearn, it was found securely stowed away. By it everything was left to little Phillis Hatherly, when she came of age, and an old friend of Ralph Garlapel's—long since dead—was appointed trustee meanwhile.

Gideon had, without doubt, really loved Phillis, as he had loved her mother, but he had also been influenced in his desire to marry her by the fact that he could then produce the

missing will as newly brought to light, and claim the property in his wife's name.

Charles Hatherly enjoyed for a few months only his cleared character and freedom; but they were, perhaps, the happiest months of his misspent life. He lived to see his daughter become Mrs. Cyril Dearn, and then seemed content to leave her in the safe keeping of her husband.

The portly and bland Mr. Scorpe never put in an appearance on New York soil again, and Mr. Denny enjoyed a great reputation in consequence.

After her son's death, Mrs. Surle left Yonkers with Bessie, and went to live in the "English neighborhood" near Dearn Park, where they were well provided for by Phillis.

People think it a curious coincidence that the young wife should have brought the fine old place back to the family that had owned it so long, and lost it. But, as Phillis said, smiling up in her husband's happy face with—for him, at least, the old witchery and charm, "Love is full of such curious coincidences, Cyril; and it was Love that gave you back your dear old home!"

THE END.

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